DETERMINISM AND FREE WILL IN SELECTED NOVELS BY JOHN STEINBECK

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of English
Appalachian State Teachers College

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in English

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by
Mary Fetter Stough
August 1964

APPROVAL SHEET

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An Abstract of a Thesis

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Defining determinism and free will was the first obligation of this thesis, along with tracing the development of these two philosophies in Western thought. The final step in this development was applying the general principles to the writings of John Steinbeck. In surveying the general literature, emphasis was given to ideas placing a particular book in one category or the other or a combination of the two.

The following early novels were examined: To a God Unknown, Tortilla Flat, In Dubious Battle, Of Mice and Men, The Grapes of Wrath, Cannery Row, and Sweet Thursday. The later novels examined were Burning Bright, East of Eden, The Short Reign of Pippin IV, and The Winter of Our Discontent. Both direct statements by the author and inferences made by the reader from the thoughts and the actions of the characters described by the author were pointed out.

The conclusions of the study were that Steinbeck is not a naturalist, that the determinism in his novels, with the exception of Of Mice and Men, is optimistic, and that the philosophy of free will dominates his novels written after The Grapes of Wrath.

PREFACE

First of all, I should like to thank Dr. O. L. Sawey for giving me so much of his time in supervising this thesis. Without his encouragement and help, the task would have been more difficult. Also, I should like to thank the other English graduate students at Appalachian for their patience and understanding. They concealed any signs of boredom when everything reminded me of some incident in Steinbeck's novels.

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CHAPTER I

DETERMINISM AND FREE WILL

Determinism and free will are conflicting philosophies of literature, life, and religion. Determinism in literature means that the fate of the characters is determined by forces other than their free will. Free will, of course, assumes that the characters decide their own fate without being forced to do so by any agent.

American literature, along with that of other countries, shares in this conflict of philosophies between determinism and free will. The backgrounds of American literary thought have been traced by Horton and Edwards, and a short summary is all that can be given here of the movements influencing or evidencing these two philosophies.

The first influence on deterministic philosophy was religion. In common with other nations of the West, America shares the Augustinian heritage of belief in predestination of souls.[1] This theological belief was reemphasized during the Reformation by John Calvin, along with God's omnipotence and man's sinfulness.[2] No matter what a man might do in

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[1] Rod W. Horton and Herbert W. Edwards, Backgrounds of American Literary Thought, p. 10.

[2] Ibid., p. 22.

this life his fate was already sealed in the next. The number of the elect was fixed forever by God, and man was powerless to change his own ultimate destination.

This Calvinist belief was picked up by the Puritans of New England. They felt, also, that they should exercise all of their powers of reason in order to understand better the true nature of God.[3] The Puritans tended to feel that material prosperity was a sign of God's favor and any personal misfortune meant that God was displeased because of some sin.[4] By their hard work the Puritans succeeded in this new world, and for some of them their belief in man's depravity and lack of free will diminished with every success.

The Age of Reason with Benjamin Franklin as its chief spokesman supplanted for the intellectuals the hard New England religion with a hopeful view of the perfectibility of man and his mastery of his own fate.[5] In addition, however, the men of the Enlightenment felt that a man's particular environment put a limit on his achievements.[6] Free will was not entirely free even at that time.

Some fifty years later Emerson, too, put a limitation on his tenet of self-reliance when he made his

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[3] Ibid., p. 43.

[4] Ibid., p. 46.

[5] Ibid., p. 50.

[6] Ibid., p. 73.

transcendental pronouncements. He encouraged men to throw off the fetters of the past, to follow the God within, and to live life enthusiastically. Transcendentalism, a localized outgrowth of European Romanticism, really was Calvinism changed by the assumption of the innate goodness of man.[7] Emerson preached the importance of the individual over society, but he also put the individual under the orders of his best self--the piece of the Oversoul inside each individual. The human will was not entirely free even to Emerson.

The limitations of environment of the Age of Reason and the inner soul of Emerson were slight hindrances to free will, but the powerful impact of Darwin's theory of evolution and the scientific attitude toward nineteenth century society on European and American literature helped to start an entirely new literary philosophy--biological determinism--and a new type of novelist--the naturalist.[8] The naturalist tries to be objective in presenting his material, to be frank in portrayal of animal-like man, neither to condemn nor praise man for actions which he cannot control, to portray all actions as unavoidable cause-effect relationship, to be pessimistic concerning man's capabilities, and to select characters and actions

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[7] Ibid., pp. 112, 113. [8] Ibid., pp. 246-247.

that are animalistic and violent.[9] Although no novelist wrote any novel with all of these attributes, any novel having some of them to a great extent should be classed naturalistic. Balzac in Comedie Humaine showed the importance of environment in shaping life, and Zola felt that "heredity was the key to modern society."[10]

Naturalism in literature of the United States developed later than that of Europe. Puritanism had left a pessimistic heritage for the growing country. The exploitation of the many by a few was a fact of American industrial life in the last years of the nineteenth century, and finally man himself seemed to be supplanted by the machine.[11] The picture was a gloomy one, and the writers of the naturalistic school pictured it as such.

Theodore Drieser was a naturalist. The fate of his characters, particularly in Sister Carrie and The American Tragedy, is determined by either heredity or environment or both. Other American writers of this period who wrote naturalistic novels were Jack London, Frank Norris, and Sherwood Anderson.[12] After World War I was fought and the

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[9] W. F. Thrall and Addison Hibbard, A Handbook to Literature, pp. 303-4.

[10] Horton and Edwards, op. cit., p. 250.

[11] Ibid., pp. 253-255. [12] Ibid., pp. 248, 259.

disillusionment of the war and the aftermath were felt, the leading American writers retreated to Europe to write pessimistically about their time.[13]

This history of determinism, both philosophical and literary, has been sketchy and incomplete. The history of free will can be treated only in the same way.

Thomas Aquinas, the Catholic theologian, believed that man is free to do evil or good and that it is man's duty to have faith to do good works. The men of the Age of Reason argued that man is perfectible (other than the environmental limitation already stated), and that he has the duty to cultivate reason and do good works, because his will is free. In New England the Unitarians insisted on man's free will to imitate the goodness of God.[14]

The American philosopher who came after the revolutionary Darwin theory, but who was quite optimistic about free will was William James. Pragmatic tests show "man can have free will simply by choosing to believe he does have it because in a given real-life situation the practical results will be different if he so believes."[15] But, as stated previously, this optimistic philosophy did not penetrate the American literary world generally. According

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[13] Ibid., p. 321.

[14] Ibid., Appendix.

[15] Ibid., p. 166.

to Horton and Edwards, the creative writers since 1900

> with only a few exceptions, such as Sandburg and Steinbeck and Saroyan, all of whom express a somewhat qualified faith in the higher destiny of mankind, our major authors have portrayed their contemporaries as confused and bewildered, oppressed by a sense of crushing impersonal forces let loose in the universe, doubtful as to the meaning and purpose of life and pathetic rather than tragic in their feeling of individual impotence.[16]

Steinbeck's "qualified faith" is the subject of this thesis. Its purpose is to point out the conflicting forces of determinism and free will in the following novels: To a God Unknown (1933), Tortilla Flat (1935), In Dubious Battle (1936), Of Mice and Men (1937), The Grapes of Wrath (1939), Cannery Row (1945), Burning Bright (1950), East of Eden (1952), Sweet Thursday (1954), The Short Reign of Pippin IV (1957), and The Winter of Our Discontent (1961). This is not a complete list of Steinbeck's novels, for he has been a prolific writer over the past thirty-four years.

The conflict in Steinbeck's ideas as shown in his novels has been pointed out by Walcutt. Steinbeck, he says, seems to be

> pulled in various directions: toward science, toward brotherhood, and less clearly toward transcendentalism and revolution. His ideals draw him to naturalistic primitivism and toward mysticism; his despair at the inhumanities of commercialism pulls him toward the

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[16] Ibid., p. 179.

opposing extremes of retreat and revolution.[17]

Some of these conflicts arrange themselves on the side of determinism, others on the side of free will. These will be discussed, as well as other examples of these two themes.

Chapter II will review the criticism of these novels with emphasis on those reviewers commenting on the thesis. These reviews will be treated chronologically in terms of novels with separate treatments of contemporary and later criticism. Chapter III will illustrate and discuss the evidences of determinism and free will in Steinbeck's early novels; Chapter IV will be concerned with these philosophies in the author's later novels; and Chapter V will contain the summary and conclusions.

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[17]Charles Walcutt, American Literary Naturalism: A Divided Stream, p. 259.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

John Steinbeck's receiving the Nobel Prize for literature in 1962 has caused a greater amount of interest in all of his novels. Prior to this time The Grapes of Wrath had been analyzed from all aspects in the scholarly journals, but his importance as a major American writer has only recently been brought to the general public by studies in inexpensive paperbacks, as well as by the reprinting of almost all of his works in paperback editions.

The critics have sometimes agreed with one another, but often they have disagreed over minor, if not major, points. Most of them agreed that To a God Unknown (1933) is a poor novel. An exception to this generalization written at the time of publication, is M. C. Dawson's review:

> This strange and mightily obsessed book is for those who are capable of yielding themselves completely to the huge embrace of earth-mysticism. Of all the books of mysticism, religious or poetic, there is none so vast and awesome as that which arises from the earth and is a passion simply for the miracle of a body that yields, puts forth, grows and dies; which is unconcerned with good or evil, solace or punishment, error or reason. And of all the books written out of such [sic] passion this is the purest expression of it that I have ever encountered.[1]

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[1] M. C. Dawson, "Review," Books (September 24, 1933), 17, quoted in The 1933 Book Review Digest, 1934, p. 897.

Dawson thus defines Steinbeck's earth-mysticism as exemplified in this book. The novelist is not interested in cause-effect relationships, but in simply describing the actions and thoughts of Joseph, the main character in the novel. If these actions have no underlying cause but just "are," the actor decides himself what to do.

Later reviews have disagreed about this thesis. Geismar states that in the novel "life must be sacrificed to life and God, the unknown God of Nature, is as blood-thirsty as his creation." This statement implies that Joseph must sacrifice himself to bring rain to the dry valley because his pantheistic God demands it. This critic, however, also states that Steinbeck's main motivation in this novel as well as in his first one, Cup of Gold (not included in this study), is opposition to the restraints of society. Therefore, Geismar thinks Steinbeck's novel shows free will, even if his ending of To a God Unknown does not.[2]

This double view is shared by Joseph W. Beach in his explanation of the real subject of the novel. In addition to the author's admiration of the pioneers, Steinbeck is also interested in primitive psychology and religion, Beach asserts. He feels, however, that the theme of the

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[2]Maxwell Geismar, Writers in Crisis, p. 250.

novel concerns the fantastic and uncanny.[3] It is readily apparent that primitive psychology is on the naturalistic level but that an interest in the uncanny implies instinctive knowledge derived from the individual will of the characters.

Another naturalistic trait is identified by Peter Lisca in his book-long study of Steinbeck and his work. Thomas, the older brother, is identified as man, the animal. Lisca also identifies the basic differences of the other three brothers: "Where Joseph seeks his relation to life through pagan rituals and Burton through his ascetic Christ, Benjy seeks nothing more profound than the miracle of the bottle."[4] Thus, the fate of these characters is determined by their different points of view. Joseph sacrifices himself in order to bring rain; Burton cannot accept Joseph's love of the oak tree because he feels his brother is denying Christ; and Benjy's sensuality and irresponsibility cause his death by a too-soon-returned husband.

Two other critics note the similarity in the novel to the ideas of transcendentalism: that at the end of the novel the world and nature are an aspect of human nature[5]

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[3]Joseph Warren Beach, American Fiction: 1920-1940, pp. 315-316.

[4]Peter Lisca, The Wide World of John Steinbeck, p. 48.

[5]F. W. Watt, John Steinbeck, p. 33.

and that the difference between Joseph and Burton is the same as that between the "inventor" and the "imitator" in Emerson's Divinity School Address.[6]

To a God Unknown is very unlike Steinbeck's other books, particularly Tortilla Flat, which was published in 1935. Fred March implies in his early review that the paisanos are motivated by free will:

> In Mr. Steinbeck's humorous and whimsical tale they appear as a gentle race of sun-loving, heavy wine-drinking, anti-social loafers and hoodlums who work only when necessity demands and generally live by a succession of devious stratagems more or less outside the law.[7]

Since they are not forced by society to do anything and even circumvent society's police force, they are free agents.

Some later reviewers, however, wonder about this freedom. Watt maintains that the paisanos are not primitives but have their own conventions and codes.[8] Warren French sees in the tales not only satire of the middle class but also satire of the paisanos. He feels that the book is essentially a tragedy of failure of man to achieve greatness. It is easy to dream of freedom but hard to be

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[6]Warren French, John Steinbeck, p. 49.

[7]Fred T. March, "Life in a California Shanty-town," The New York Times Book Review, June 2, 1935, p. 6.

[8]Watt, op. cit., p. 41.

a free agent.[9]

These serious interpretations of the book were written after Steinbeck's own printed comments about the stories being an outgrowth of his Arthurian cycle study.[10] If the author took them seriously, the critics had to look at the tales again. Peter Lisca points out that the paisanos do have some dealings with ordinary society when they cannot avoid it. "Although on such occasions they temporarily accept its conventions, they nevertheless see these conventions as arbitrary forms rather than absolute truths," writes Lisca.[11] He further states that the paisanos are not primitives, but civilized because of their "intricate patterns for satisfying wants through socially accepted channels."[12] These "intricate patterns" are conceived by free agents, not puppets of primitive urges.

A thoroughly mixed view is taken by another critic. He states that the paisanos are "content ordinarily to wait, like certain lower organisms, for pleasure to come their way in the form of food or chance acquaintance."[13] They do something, he maintains, only to break the monotony

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[9] French, op. cit., p. 59.

[10] John Steinbeck, "My Short Novels," English Journal, XLIII (March, 1954), 147.

[11] Lisca, op. cit., p. 82. [12] Ibid., p. 88.

[13] Edwin B. Burgum, The Novel and the World's Dilemma, p. 276.

when the deed is convenient. "They have long since learned to avoid situations beyond their control."[14] If the paisanos are "lower organisms," they would have to accept anything that happened to them and would not be able to "avoid situations beyond their control."

On one level at least Tortilla Flat is an extremely funny book, but Steinbeck's next published work, In Dubious Battle (1936), is not funny on any level. This story of the efforts of communist organizers to start and to maintain a strike of the fruit pickers of California is serious. Early reviewers noted that Mac and Jim are real people,[15] that the background of the struggle is the contemporary economic situation,[16] and that the book is "courageous and desperately honest."[17] One of these reviewers describes the action: "Violence results in counter-violence. The strikers are doomed."[18] They are described as they

> integrate and disintegrate, now an amorphous tangle of individuals and small groups, now an army, now a

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[14] Ibid.

[15] Harry T. Moore, "Though the Field Be Lost," The New Republic, LXXXIV (February 19, 1936), 54.

[16] William Rose Benet, "Apple Pickers Strike," The Saturday Review of Literature, XIII (February 1, 1936), 10.

[17] Fred T. Marsh, "Review of In Dubious Battle," The New York Times Book Review, February 2, 1936, p. 7.

[18] Ibid.

> fanatic mob moving as one, fused into a single will, with double strength of their members, only to dissolve again into helpless disorder.[19]

Free will is shown here in the confusion of the men as they disintegrate. But the mob will is not the individual will, and the failure of the outcome is determined.

Many of the later reviewers agree that the novel is deterministic as a whole. Harry Thornton Moore believes that the novel shows the "neutralization of the problems of the individual and of concepts of a generalized fate."[20] Baker sees Mac and Jim as trying to be "the directive, disciplinary force, the brain, for 900 striking men, an extremely complex super-organism in which all those lesser individuals are merged."[21] Dr. Burton, he feels, is equivalent to the Greek chorus in pronouncing judgment on the methods used to join the men. The whole story has an air of "tragic inevitability,"[22] and the theme, like Othello, is a picture of emotion triumphing over reason.[23]

Another reviewer points out that the police brutality to the strikers represents the cruel indifference of nature,

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[19] Ibid.

[20] Harry Thornton Moore, The Novels of John Steinbeck: A First Critical Study, p. 40.

[21] Carlos Baker, "In Dubious Battle Revalued," The New York Times Book Review, July 25, 1943, p. 4.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., p. 16.

and it forces them to join together to use efficiently their energies.[24]

On the other hand Peter Lisca writes that Mac acts mainly for the party at first, but that his individuality is asserted as the story progresses when he acts on impulse in passion and loses efficiency as a party leader. Jim's growth is the opposite--from a strong individuality to use of the strikers as a party tool.[25] The action of the strikers is directed and the consequences determined by Mac and Jim, he believes. Although the strikers' fate is determined by Mac and Jim, the leaders themselves use their free will.

This view is shared by Frohock. He writes:

> We know from the start that the strike itself must and will fail, but the central character, Jim Nolan, dies for reasons which may be compellingly valid for him but do not necessarily compel us as we read. That he should die where he does, and at that time, is the result of his own choice. We have to take the story, then, not as a tragedy, but as a tale of latter-day martyrdom.[27]

Jim's death is seen by Warren French as a tragedy of "a man destroyed by uncontrollable inner forces."[28] He feels that the story is not fatalistic "in the sense that the author views man as a mechanism helpless in the

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[24]Burgum, op. cit., pp. 277-278.

[25]Lisca, op. cit., pp. 121-122. [26]Ibid., p. 125.

[27]W. M. Frohock, The Novel of Violence in America: 1920-1950, p. 158.

[28]French, op. cit., p. 71.

grasp of some superior force."[29]

Thus, the critics agree that the novel's general tone is deterministic, but they disagree about the actions of the central characters.

One year after this strike novel, Steinbeck published Of Mice and Men as "an attempt to write a novel in three acts to be played from the lines."[30] The early reviewers see this novel as deterministic in tone. Society has kept Lennie and George from rising higher than "bummers and vagabonds."[31] Lennie's baby urges have circumvented their rise, too; but "when George is around he is all right, for he obeys George implicitly."[32] Lennie is confused, "unknowingly powerful, utterly will-less."[33] Marsh sums up the early reaction:

> The tension increases and the apparently casual acts and conversation nevertheless fit together to create suspense in the atmosphere of impending doom. . . . The climax comes not as a shock, but as a dreaded inevitability.[34]

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[29] Ibid. [30] Steinbeck, op. cit., p. 147.

[31] Henry Seidel Canby, "Casuals of the Road," The Saturday Review of Literature, XV (February 27, 1937), 7.

[32] Fred T. Marsh, "John Steinbeck's Tale of Drifting Men," The New York Times Book Review, February 28, 1937, p. 71.

[33] Harry T. Moore, "Review of Of Mice and Men," The New Republic, LXXXIV (March 3, 1937), 119.

[34] Fred T. Marsh, "John Steinbeck's Tale of Drifting Men," The New York Times Book Review, February 28, 1937, p. 7.

Only a year after the novel was published Moore in the first critical study of Steinbeck's work compares the spirit of doom in Of Mice and Men to the fatalism of Thomas Hardy and Robinson Jeffers.[35] Edwin Burgum states that Lennie and George are "caught between the dual pressures of their own limitations and those imposed by their station in society."[36]

Watt points out that "the reciprocal nature of the relationship between Lennie and George . . . rescues it from sentimentality and makes it convincing."[37] But Quinn and Wagenknecht agree that there is no dignity or tragedy in the novel because of Lennie's subhuman nature.[38]

Steinbeck's skill in writing, however, is not an issue here. The deterministic philosophy of the novel is generally accepted by the critics. However, at least two of them insist that there is an element of free will. Peter Lisca writes that the interruption by Curley's wife of the dreaming of Crook, Candy, and Lennie shows the

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[35]Harry T. Moore, The Novels of John Steinbeck: A First Critical Study, p. 50.

[36]Burgum, op. cit., p. 279.

[37]Watt, op. cit., p. 61.

[38]A. H. Quinn, Literature of the American People: An Historical and Critical Study, p. 959; and Edward Wagenknecht, Cavalcade of the American Novel, p. 446.

possibility of a change in the story by

> bringing with her the harsh realities of the outside world and by arousing Lennie's interest. . . . The story achieves power through a delicate balance of the protagonists' free will and the force of circumstances.[39]

Warren French points out that the novel is not deterministic because George does not let the mob kill Lennie. He decides to kill Lennie and to lie about it. This, then, is not a story of man's defeat at the hands of nature, "but of man's painful conquest of this nature and of his difficult conscious rejection of his dreams of greatness and acceptance of his own mediocrity."[40]

One year after Of Mice and Men was published the germ of Steinbeck's new novel was already printed. The Grapes of Wrath grew out of his reporting of the migratory situation in California. These reports were gathered into the pamphlet, Their Blood Is Strong, which was published in 1938. He explains clearly that the force of California society is against the workers.

> [In California] the migrants are needed, and they are hated. Arriving in a district they find the dislike always voted out by the resident to the foreigner, the outlander. This hatred of the stranger occurs in the whole range of human history, from the most primitive village farm to our own highly organized industrial farming. The migrants are hated for the following reasons, that they are ignorant and dirty people, that

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[39] Lisca, op. cit., p. 138.

[40] French, op. cit., p. 76.

> they are carriers of disease, that they increase the necessity for police and the tax bill for schooling in the community, and that if they are allowed to organize, they can, simply by refusing to work, wipe out the season's crops. They are never received into a community nor into the life of a community. Wanderers in fact, they are never allowed to feel at home in the communities that demand their services.[41]

Steinbeck further explains that the new migrants are small farmers who have lost their land because of the drought. "They are not migrants by nature. They are gypsies by force of circumstances."[42] This negative feeling of society against the migrants is a determining force over which they have no control. Steinbeck describes the attempts to suppress the migrants as Fascist and affirms that in California democracy is losing.[43]

After reading the novel an early reviewer sees this relationship and states that the California "part of the story reads like the news from Nazi Germany."[44] Another one of the reviewers defends the crude language as necessary and right, but admits that some may think it uninhibited coarseness.[45] He could have said that frank language is a

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[41]John Steinbeck, Their Blood Is Strong, quoted in its entirety in A Companion to The Grapes of Wrath, edited by Warren French, pp. 54-55.

[42]Ibid., p. 56. [43]Ibid., p. 87.

[44]Peter Monro Jack, "John Steinbeck's New Novel Brims with Fear and Pity," The New York Times Book Review, April 16, 1936, p. 4.

[45]George Stevens, "Steinbeck's Uncovered Wagon," The Saturday Review of Literature, XIX (April 15, 1939), 4.

trait of a naturalistic novel.

The later criticism almost universally accepts The Grapes of Wrath as Steinbeck's masterpiece. The book has been pulled apart and put back together again by scholars searching for the answer to its greatness. Some of these studies have emphasized the determinism-free will thesis.

Although Frohock believes personally that the actual problem of the Okies is partly the result of their own greed and stupidity, he describes the Joads' journey as beyond their control:

> When they pull up stakes for the long drag from Oklahoma to California, they are pushed on by a force which they understand no better than the Greeks understood fate. We speak of Economic Drive as the Greeks spoke of Gods, but we know only vaguely what urges them along, and the Joads know not at all. We know further that whatever the Joads do they will never be able to escape, and that the little wisps of hope they carry with them, feeble as they are, are unjustified: disaster lies ahead; they hasten to it; they could not turn back if they would.[46]

The battle with the California authorities is described by Beach as inevitable because the two groups "are caught in an intricate web of forces so great and so automatic in their working that they are helpless to combat them or even to understand them."[47] These forces are deterministic.

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[46]Frohock, op. cit., p. 152.

[47]Joseph Warren Beach, American Fiction: 1920-1940, p. 537.

Free will is suggested by Edwin Bowden by the Joads' having to meet the usual problems of life--food, shelter, clothing, medical aid.[48] His description of the breaking up of the family shows an ambivalent attitude:

> Some of these losses are inevitable and unavoidable, others are the result of too great an individual weakness, but each tends to lessen the fierce family loyalty and will that carry the Joads through their trials and their loneliness.[49]

The family loyalty is replaced by a greater group loyalty. "The individual is no longer in complete control of his own end . . . but must depend upon others as well as himself,"[50] Bowden continues, again asserting determinism as the philosophical point of view of the book.

One of the studies of The Grapes of Wrath that particularly applies to the determinism-free will approach was written by Frederick Carpenter in 1941, two years after the novel was first published. Carpenter believes that Jim Casy's philosophy "motivates and gives significance to the lives of Tom Joad and Ma, and Rose of Sharon. It is not too much to say that Jim Casy's ideas determine and direct the Joads' actions."[51] Carpenter thus affirms that

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[48]Edwin T. Bowden, The Dungeon of the Heart: Human Isolation and the American Novel, p. 139.

[49]Ibid., p. 142 [50]Ibid., p. 149.

[51]Frederick I. Carpenter, "The Philosophical Joads," College English, II (January, 1941), 316.

the novel is deterministic in this instance. He later points out the three different American philosophies voiced by Casy in the novel:

> the transcendental oversoul, Emerson's faith in the common man and his Protestant self-reliance: . . . Whitman's religion of the love of all men . . . and . . . the realistic philosophy of pragmatism and its emphasis on effective action.[52]

Thus, Casy's philosophy is essentially that of the free will of Emerson, Whitman, and William James and should free the Joads to act independently if they really understand it.

The ending of the novel was first criticized by the contemporary reviewers and has been both justified and damned by scholars since 1939. Some who criticize the ending feel that it is just clever,[53] or that it is sheer symbolism.[54] Some other critics who praise the ending have various interpretations: that it is symbolic of the vital persistence of the common people's will to live and their faith in life;[55] that it represents a symbolic paradox of great despair bringing forth the strongest assertion of faith;[56] that it is a gesture of universal brotherhood

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[52] Ibid., p. 325.

[53] Quinn, op. cit., p. 961.

[54] Wagenknecht, op. cit., p. 444.

[55] Beach, op. cit., p. 332.

[56] Peter Lisca, "The Grapes of Wrath as Fiction," Publications of the Modern Language Association, LXXII (March, 1957), 309.

preached by Casy and discussed by Tom;[57] that it is a symbol of resurrection, hope, and the Eucharist;[58] and that it is to show that the most important function of life is to nourish life.[59] The controversy has raged for twenty-five years over Rose of Sharon's giving her dead baby's milk to the starving man. Almost all of the critics have agreed that this ending is significant and symbolic, but the particular symbolism has been a point of argument. If the ending is interpreted optimistically, the tone of the novel cannot be traditionally deterministic, for there is no hope in naturalistic novels.

The arguments of the critics continued when Steinbeck's Cannery Row was published near the close of World War II. The author wrote about this 1944 novel:

> This was a kind of nostalgic thing, written for a group of soldiers who had said to me, 'Write something funny that isn't about the war. Write something for us to read--we're sick of war.'[60]

Cannery Row is far from the war in that its setting is Monterey and its characters are the bums, prostitutes and

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[57]French, op. cit., p. 107.

[58]H. Kelly Crockett, "The Bible and The Grapes of Wrath," College English, XXIV (November, 1962), 199.

[59]Eric W. Carlson, "Rebuttal--Symbolism in The Grapes of Wrath," College English, XVIV (January, 1958), 174.

[60]John Steinbeck, "My Short Novels," English Journal, XLIII (March, 1954), 147.

"business men" of the Row. None of the early reviewers take the book seriously enough to point out evidences of free will and determinism. This fact is also true of Quinn who calls Cannery Row and The Wayward Bus (not included in this study)

> a mixture of sordidness and whimsy of [Steinbeck's] earlier work. The sentimentality which deluges those books like cheap perfume is not a satisfactory substitute for a thorough emotional cleaning.[61]

Many of the other critics point out the similarities between Tortilla Flat and Cannery Row. Frohock maintains that society, the economic environment, and the warm California weather made the paisanos and the bums what they are.[62] Peter Lisca writes that both have as main characters "a tight little group with its own moral standards . . . and this group is made up not so much of social outcasts as of individuals who have retreated from society."[63] According to both men, society is a determining force--that outside the Row and that of the Row itself.

The book is declared subtly ironic by Warren French who further states that the enemy in the novel is the desire to get personal security without regard for others,[64] thus implying the characters possess free will. Agreeing

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[61]Quinn, op. cit., p. 961.

[62]Frohock, op. cit., p. 151.

[63]Lisca, Wide World, p. 199. [64]French, op. cit., p. 120.

with French on the serious purpose of the book is F. W. Watt. He believes the theme of Cannery Row is to give an illustration of the paradox of success secured by the traits we hate and failure guaranteed by using the traits we admire.[65] Both of these later reviewers emphasize the evidences of free will in the book. Steinbeck himself has called Cannery Row a "poisoned cream puff"[66] and a "'mixed up book' with a 'pretty general ribbing' in it."[67] These statements show his own conflicts about the novel when they are compared with his desire to entertain the soldiers during the war.

When Burning Bright was published in 1950, only Norman Cousins and Maxwell Geismar in their reviews treat the free will-determinism theme. Cousins defends the novel mainly on the basis of its theme--"That so long as human beings exist anywhere every man is immortal." He also asserts that Victor is "a pompous and self-willed brute."[68] Geismar describes Victor as "jealous, frustrated, and in human terms the only credible character in the play [who]

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[65] F. W. Watt, op. cit., p. 81.

[66] Quoted in Warren French, op. cit., p. 120.

[67] Quoted in Louis Gannett, "John Steinbeck: Novelist at Work," Atlantic Monthly, CLXXVI (December, 1945), 60.

[68] Norman Cousins, "Hemingway and Steinbeck," The Saturday Review of Literature, XXXIII (October 27, 1950), 26.

has to be murdered, of course, to preserve Mordeen's secret."[69] Victor has free will to be jealous or brutish. His death, however, is determined by forces outside his will.

Steinbeck's attitude toward heredity and environment is emphasized by Warren French, who points out that Victor's son may acquire his natural father's strength and agility but may also absorb the affection and perception of Mordeen and Joe Saul by environment.[70] Thus, the author optimistically believes that the child can have the best of both heredity and environment.

Two years after Burning Bright was published Steinbeck completed East of Eden. This book, the longest and most ambitious one since The Grapes of Wrath, received much critical attention at the time of its publication. The conflict is acute between the critics who think East of Eden is "probably the best of John Steinbeck's novels,"[71] and those who think the novel "raises anew the question of why

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[69]Maxwell Geismar, "Cosmic Mother and the Gift of Life," The Saturday Review of Literature, XXXIII (October 21, 1950), 14.

[70]French, op. cit., p. 151.

[71]Mark Schorer, "A Dark and Violent Steinbeck Novel," The New York Times Book Review, September 21, 1952, p. 1. (Schorer, however, recanted and refused to have his favorable review reprinted in Tedlock and Wicker's Steinbeck and His Critics, as reported by Peter Lisca, Wide World, p. 265.)

Steinbeck's talent has declined so rapidly and so far."[72] The theme of the book is variously stated by these early reviewers:

> Here he is dealing philosophically with the effects of inherited traits upon the individual's responsibility to overcome his heredity.[73]

> [The thesis is] first, that Good and Evil are absolute not relative things, and second, that in making a choice between them man is a free agent, not the victim of his heredity, his environment, or of anything else.[74]

> Its subject, in Steinbeck's words is 'the permanent war between good and evil'. And it makes the triumphant assertion that man, for all his weakness, is free to choose the righteous course; and that, by recognition of his soul's freedom, he gains the knowledge that he can fight through and win.[75]

That the theme of East of Eden is obviously the triumph of free will over determinism the early reviewers agree. The effectiveness of Steinbeck's implementation of the theme into the characters and action in this novel has been doubted. The greatest controversy has centered around Cathy (Kate later in the novel). According to an unfavorable reviewer she is one of the best of Steinbeck's talking

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[72]Lee Gurko, "Steinbeck's Later Fiction," The Nation, CLXXV (September 20, 1952), 235.

[73]Eleanor T. Smith, "Review," Library Journal, LXXVII (August, 1952), 1303.

[74]Joseph Wood Krutch, "John Steinbeck's Dramatic Tale of Three Generations," The New York Herald Tribune Book Review, September 21, 1952, p. 1.

[75]Charles Rolo, "The Peripatetic Review," The Atlantic, CXC (October, 1952), 94.

animals. He continues:

> Not that you believe in [her]; there aren't really animals like this. But until the moral turns her into an illustration for a Salvation-Army speech, Cathy is like the characters in good animal epics, a fine macabre fancy.[76]

In the words of William Phillips, Cathy is the "devil in the guise of a psychopath."[77] A generally favorable reviewer calls her the "most vicious female in literature, whose story, if we accept it at all, we accept at the level of folklore, the abstract fiction of the Social Threat, of a Witch beyond women."[78] On the other hand, another writer sees Cathy as "hatefully probable and understandable."[79] Charles Rolo believes that both Cathy and Lee, the Chinese servant, are preposterous characters.[80]

Three significant statements about the general classification of Steinbeck's philosophy up to this point are made by differing reviewers of East of Eden. Webster states:

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[76]Arthur Mizener, "In the Land of Nod," New Republic, CXXVII (October 6, 1952), 22.

[77]William Phillips, "Maleism and Moralism," The American Mercury, LXXV (October, 1952), 97.

[78]Mark Schorer, op. cit., p. 1.

[79]Harvey Curtis Webster, "Out of the New-born Sun," Saturday Review, XXXV (September 13, 1952), 12.

[80]Rolo, op. cit., p. 94.

> The novel marks a definite advance in Steinbeck's thinking which has been defined by Edmund Wilson as too barely naturalistic. In his earlier novels men approach the condition of animals with uniformity that sometimes becomes monotonous. In "East of Eden" the animality is still there but it is joined to a sense of human dignity and what it may achieve.[81]

Gurko is concerned over the change (as far as he is concerned) in Steinbeck's thinking:

> He is, or was, at his best when moved by indignation, horror, passionate tenderness, and the other violent emotions that animated the naturalists from Zola down.[82]

Webster thus believes that Steinbeck's former works had emphasized animalism and that the change toward belief in human dignity is an improvement. Gurko, contrarily, thinks that the author's not being a naturalist in East of Eden weakens his talent. In addition to these conflicting opinions a third one is noted. That Steinbeck has ever really been a naturalist is indirectly denied by Krutch:

> Moral relativism and some sort of deterministic philosophy have commonly seemed to be implied in the writings of that school of hard-boiled realists with which Mr. Steinbeck has sometimes been loosely associated. . . . [These are] rejected in "East of Eden." The author who was acclaimed as a social critic in "The Grapes of Wrath" and sometimes abused as a mere writer of sensational melodrama in some subsequent books, plainly announces here that it is as a moralist that

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[81] Harvey Curtis Webster, "Out of the New-born Sun," Saturday Review, XXXV (September 13, 1952), 12.

[82] Gurko, op. cit., p. 236.

he wants to be taken.[83]

The qualifications in this denial, however, weaken its impact for a clearer understanding of the thesis of this paper. The definiteness of the animalism school of Steinbeck criticism is hard to refute with words like "commonly seemed," "sometimes," and "loosely associated."

The later critics of East of Eden agree that the novel has more weaknesses than it has strengths. Peter Lisca affirms that in reality the novel is in two fragments, the story about the Trasks and the one about the Hamiltons, and that Steinbeck denies free will to Adam and Cathy, the former because his innate fairness forces him to give Cathy her share of Charles' money and the latter because she is seemingly innately evil.[84]

Edmund Fuller believes that Cathy's character is the weak thread in the novel. By stating that Cathy is a monster Steinbeck has resurrected Total Depravity of Calvinism without even Calvin's hope of redemption through faith. Fuller continues:

> The effect of his monster thesis is to render meaningless the elaborately drawn lifelong portrait of Cathy. She can have no moral significance or identifi-

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[83]Krutch, op. cit., p. 1.

[84]Lisca, Wide World, p. 269.

cation value if she is a random mutant, a moral freak.[85]

Warren French notes that Steinbeck expresses doubt about Cathy's monsterism and states that the author's indecision weakens the novel. In the case of Joe, Cathy's assistant, the author seems to believe that poor environment produced his anti-social behavior. The treatment of these two villains is contradictory, French believes, as well as the description of the whole character of Cathy.[86]

The reviews of East of Eden have been quoted at length because this is the novel most important in the discussion of determinism and free will in Steinbeck's works. The other references to his philosophy have been indirect. The essays on morality in this novel are direct statements of the free will-determinism theme and the actions of his characters illustrate it.

East of Eden is a serious book with a serious theme. Two years after its publication Steinbeck published Sweet Thursday, which picks up the story of Doc and Mack and the boys. Two of the contemporary critics have pertinent observations. The first one comments on the evidence of free will in the novel:

Fortunately the plot in these low-life comedies of

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[85]Edmund Fuller, Man in Modern Fiction, p. 28.

[86]French, op. cit., pp. 154-155.

> Steinbeck's is a good deal less important than characters and their attitudes--their lack of either ambition or inhibition; their camaraderie; their gusto and capacity for pleasure; their admiration, if not imitation of the good, the true and the beautiful.[87]

More important than this surface estimation of the characters is Hugh Holman's comparison of Steinbeck to Dickens. Holman writes that critics should not judge Steinbeck's books by the logical standards of the naturalist. He has seemed to be one because of his interest in science and his damning of the social system. But the greatest single theme in all of his books is "the common bonds of humanity and love which make goodness and happiness possible."[88] Steinbeck, like Dickens, is a social critic, more interested in sentiment and the happiness of the lowest level of life than in science or system. In Sweet Thursday the picture of Prairie Grove, the middle-class haven, is satire, Holman continues. The virtues (except sexual morality) of the bourgeois are exhibited by the whores at Black Flag, and Mack and the boys are different from the Prairie Grove citizens mainly because they are happy and loving. Thus, these Cannery Row characters really do not damn the whole social system, but only "criticize its failures through the

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[87]Milton Rugoff, "Business as Usual and Fun, Too, on John Steinbeck's Cannery Row," The New York Herald Tribune Book Review, June 13, 1954, pp. 1, 11.

[88]Hugh Holman "A Narrow-gauge Dickens," New Republic, CXXX (June 7, 1954), 19.

examples they yield of success."[89] Although Holman believes that the purpose of Sweet Thursday is not as worthy as that of The Grapes of Wrath, it is "still worthy of respect."[90]

The later critics are not as favorable toward the book as Holman. Peter Lisca considers Sweet Thursday an inferior book which represents a continuing deterioration of Steinbeck's work to "irresponsible sentimentality."[91] Agreeing with this charge, Warren French goes even further in condemning the book as anti-intellectual because of the traditional happy ending's being instigated by the violent action of a subnormal character, incapable of reason. The book seems to preach the sermon that "if one is sweet, one doesn't have to be bright."[92] As Doc gets Suzy he also receives a research appointment at California Institute of Technology. This deus ex machina ending is improbable, according to French.[93]

The Short Reign of Pippin IV, published in 1957, is praised by Edward Weeks for Steinbeck's liberal-humanistic principles, but the reviewer insists that they are too obviously stated to be effective.[94] Of the early critics

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[89] Ibid.

[90] Ibid., p. 20.

[91] Lisca, Wide World, p. 284.

[92] French, op. cit., p. 158.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Edward Weeks, "A New King for France," The Atlantic Monthly, CC (July, 1957), 84.

only Elizabeth Janeway treats the determinism-free will theme. She notes that M. Heristal is forced by heredity to undertake the position as king and that

> to insist on taking Mr. Steinbeck's fun too seriously is to be a spoilsport. Let us pass over in silence . . . that Puritan structure of morality which our author can never quite ignore, and enjoy the fabrication he has draped over it.[95]

This Puritan structure is the same black and white, good and evil, that was discovered in East of Eden by the critics.

Warren French finds in Pippin a recent example of a man rejecting fame and power rather than compromising the truth. He discovers in the king's humanitarian code "the transcendental concept that people might like to do good rather than evil."[96] The author seems to want his characters to realize that to progress they must learn their present state without becoming guilty or embarrassed. The book ends according to French, just like The Grapes of Wrath and Cannery Row, with the thought "that conditions might improve if men would simply be content to accept themselves as they are--not to cease trying to change themselves but to stop persecuting others for being different from them."[97]

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[95]Elizabeth Janeway, "A Star-Gazing King," The New York Times Book Review, April 14, 1957, pp. 6, 16.

[96]French, op. cit., p. 168.

[97]Ibid., p. 169.

These remarks indicate that the characters have free will and must exercise it in order better to understand themselves.

Although French's estimation of The Short Reign of Pippin IV is favorable, both Peter Lisca and F. W. Watt believe that the novel represents a decline in Steinbeck's talents. In fact, Lisca compares the book with short stories the author wrote as a college undergraduate because of its poor technique and form.[98]

Four years after the publication of the novel set in contemporary France, Steinbeck moved his locale back to the United States--not, however, to his native California, but to New England. The Winter of Our Discontent, like all of Steinbeck's later novels, received mixed reviews. One reviewer believes the ease in our society of making a shark out of a lamb is true to life, but that it takes more than a true thesis to make a novel.[99] The story also shows the importance of heredity in determining Ethan's actions by his attachment to his family home and his admiration for the Biblical teachings of his Puritan Great-Aunt Deborah,

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[98]F. W. Watt, John Steinbeck, p. 102; and Peter Lisca, Wide World, p. 286.

[99]Virginia Peterson, "John Steinbeck's Modern Morality Tale," The New York Herald Tribune Book Review, June 25, 1961, p. 29.

this reviewer continues.[100] This admiration is damned (by the Yale Review) for being ancestor worship and not being appropriate as a solution to America's moral ills.[101] That these moral ills are caused by the decay of the general ethical standards is the theme of the book, writes Carlos Baker.[102] The Time reviewer feels that Steinbeck does not make a contribution to the ethical picture because he reduces the world of money and business "to a branch of witchcraft."[103]

Steinbeck's use of the supernatural is a weakness of the novel and causes him not to answer the question he raised, writes Hicks;[104] but again Baker disagrees. Ethan is caught in a socio-economic trap and wishes to escape. Since his discontent becomes active, he is able to change his way of life. Baker writes:

> It is just here that Steinbeck's novel suggests rather than in the configuration of the stars or the

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[100] Ibid.

[101] J. W. Hartt, "New Books in Review," Yale Review, LI (December, 1961), 306.

[102] Carlos Baker, "All That Was in the Cards for a Man Named Ethan Hawley," The New York Times Book Review, June 25, 1961, p. 3.

[103] "Damnation of Ethan Hawley," Time, LXXVII (June 23, 1961), 61.

[104] Granville Hicks, "Many-Sided Morality," Saturday Review, XLIV (June 24, 1961), 11.

> hidden predictions of the Farot packs, that the patterns of fresh action are accountably initiated. Yet who shall say that cards and stars and talismans have not played some obscure role in sparking the prepared mixture and setting the vehicle in motion?[105]

According to this view Ethan acted on his own behalf, but he might actually have been pushed originally by mysterious outside forces. These forces would constitute agents of determinism.

Since The Winter of Our Discontent was published recently, very few later critical studies have been made. One critic believes this book and East of Eden share similar virtues and faults. The latest work has the "intense, baffling integrity that surrounds the central character,"[106] but in addition it has the awkward symbolism and unconvincing mixture of fantasy and realism that are also present in East of Eden. Ethan's character is split between the honest, dream-troubled man and the facetious, resentful man who betrays his employer. Watt believes that the first person narration was a problem for Steinbeck because the author could identify himself with Ethan's wise actions but not with his foolish ones.[107]

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[105] Carlos Baker, "All That in the Cards for a Man Named Ethan Hawley," The New York Times Book Review, June 25, 1961, p. 3.

[106] F. W. Watt, op. cit., p. 102.

[107] Ibid., p. 103.

The Winter of Our Discontent is the last novel that Steinbeck has written. The critical picture of the author is often a confusing one because the critics disagree about the worth of the novels and, as far as this study is concerned, about the evidences of determinism or free will in the actions of the characters. This study will attempt to shed some light on this confusion.

CHAPTER III

THE EARLY STEINBECK

Some of John Steinbeck's novels manifest determinism or free will, or both, by the actions of the characters as well as by direct editorial pronouncements. Since the deterministic novelist usually writes about a pessimistic world, his fictional characters live wholly motivated by forces outside their control. In general they are controlled by their biological heredity and by the pressures of society. If these characters make a choice of their own free will, the deterministic bonds are broken for a moment at least. If they have hope that their particular world will improve, the pessimistic, automatic cause-effect belief is contradicted. Evidences of both determinism and free will are present in Steinbeck's novels.

To a God Unknown seemed deterministic from the beginning. Joseph, the most important character, was constitutionally different from his brothers and was mystically, as well as biologically, descended from his father. Steinbeck explains this relationship:

> On the old farm in Vermont his father had merged with the land until he became the living symbol of the unit, land and its inhabitants. . . . When [Joseph] walked bareheaded through the fields, feeling the wind in his beard, his eyes smouldered with lust. All things about him, the soil, the cattle and the people were fertile, and Joseph was the source, the root of

their fertility; his was the motivating lust.[1]

Joseph felt the same way about the land and the people that his father had. His father had told him that he would know by mystic communion whether or not his California home site would be acceptable--and he did. He built his house under the big oak tree because he felt that his father's spirit resided there. His actions after this time until Burton killed the oak tree were determined by Joseph's pantheistic belief. He talked to the tree, offered sacrifices of meat to it, and finally put his young son in the branches for the tree's blessing.

These actions his Calvinistic brother could not accept. Burton was naturally constituted for a religious life. Although he had a wife and four children, celibacy was his natural state. Steinbeck says:

> Burton was never well. His cheeks were drawn and lean, and his eyes hungry for a pleasure he did not expect this side of heaven. In a way it gratified him that his health was bad, for it proved that God thought of him enough to make him suffer.[2]

Burton would not allow Joseph to put his young son in the tree while he was there. Burton told Elizabeth, Joseph's wife, that her husband was denying Christ. Since Joseph would not swear that he would not put his son in the tree,

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[1]John Steinbeck, To a God Unknown, pp. 41-42.

[2]Ibid., p. 38.

Burton was forced, because of the kind of man he was, to leave the ranch in order to leave the evil that was there. He told Joseph:

> "It isn't only you, Joseph. The rot was in our father and it was not dug out. It grew until it possessed him. . . . If you had gone among people who knew the Word and were strong in the Word, the thing might have died--but you came here. . . . The mountains are too high. . . . The place is too savage. And all the people carry the seed of this evil thing in them. I've seen them, and I know. . . . I can only pray that your son will not inherit the rot."[3]

Burton not only prayed; he girdled the tree that he believed his brother worshiped in order to kill it and to keep the devil out.

Thomas was entirely different from his brothers. He had a kinship with animals that they seemed to understand. "He was not kind to animals; at least no kinder than they were to each other, but he must have acted with a consistency beasts would understand, for all creatures trusted him."[4] Rama, his wife, understood Thomas, "treated him as though he were an animal, kept him clean and fed and warm, and didn't often frighten him."[5] Thomas was afraid when men talked about religion or politics or trade; and he feared also the pine tree retreat and the old man at the sea

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[3] Ibid., p. 206.

[4] Ibid., p. 36.

[5] Ibid., p. 37.

whom he considered insane. His actions were dictated by his innate character, and no other reason is given by Steinbeck. Although Thomas understood animals and liked them, his feeling is instinctive and not sentimental.[6] His character did not include the violent animalism associated with naturalistic novels.

The most outstanding amoral character in To a God Unknown was Benjy, Joseph's younger brother. Steinbeck tells us that Benjy was dissolute and undependable, looked helpless, and was loved by women whom he later seduced. "He lied, stole a little, cheated, broke his word and imposed upon kindnesses; and everyone loved Benjy and excused and guarded him."[7] Benjy was not blamed for his behaviour by the author or by his family. After Benjy was killed by Juanito for seducing his wife, Rama told Elizabeth that he

> "stole the precious little decency of girls. Why, he drank to steal a particle of death--and now he has it all. This had to happen, Elizabeth. If you throw a great handful of beans at an upturned thimble, one is pretty sure to go in."[8]

Rama felt that she understood Benjy and said, "I know how sorry he was to be Benjy, and how he couldn't help it."[9] Benjy's actions were also determined by his instinctive

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[6] Ibid., p. 36.

[7] Ibid., p. 39.

[8] Ibid., p. 116.

[9] Ibid., p. 120.

bent toward destroying himself.

Rama was the all-knowing woman in this novel. She controlled her own and Burton's children by her natural authority, "for the laws of Rama never changed, bad was bad and bad was punished, and good was eternally, delightfully good. It was delicious to be good in Rama's house."[10] After Elizabeth's death, Rama knew that Joseph needed a symbol of the continuance of life; so she went naked to him for their violent mating.[11] She told him, "You are complete again; I wanted to be a part of you, and perhaps I am. But--I do not think so."[12] Rama did have a choice in her actions, however, because she was not forced by circumstances or environment to execute the authority over the children or to understand all of the men in her house.

Elizabeth was courted awkwardly by Joseph who did not want to waste time on nonessentials. Her eyes were her most beautiful feature; they were "set extremely far apart and lashed so thickly they seemed to guard remote and preternatural knowledge."[13] When she went alone to the pines before her baby was born, she was awed by the feeling of peace she had. Then she made two wishes--to die and to know her husband. Almost immediately the pines became

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[10] Ibid., pp. 37-38. [11] Ibid., p. 245.

[12] Ibid., p. 246. [13] Ibid., p. 59.

sinister to her and she became afraid. She prayed, "Do not let this thing pass through me into my child, Lord Jesus. Guard me against the ancient things in my blood." And the author tells us that her ancestors had been Druids.[14] After her baby was born she told Joseph of her awe and her fear and asked that he take her back so that she could get over her fear. Just before they were to leave the pines, Elizabeth climbed up the rock to really tame it; but she slipped on the moss and broke her neck.[15] Elizabeth's actions seemed fated. She had no choice in what she did because of her ancestry and the effect of the pines on her.

Juanito experienced the peace of the pines, too, because of the inheritance and influence of his Indian mother. When Joseph first met Juanito, he was told of Juanito's interest in killing somebody with his knife. "That's the way he keeps feeling proud. But he knows he won't and that keeps him from being too proud."[16] However, Juanito used his knife to kill Benjy. Joseph met him at the pines after the murder and told him, "This thing was natural. You did what your nature demanded. It is natural and it is finished."[17] Joseph did not blame him for the murder, but Juanito decided to leave the land until Benjy's

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[14] Ibid., p. 183. [15] Ibid., p. 234.

[16] Ibid., p. 19. [17] Ibid., p. 130.

bones were clean. This time came when Joseph retreated to the pines to keep the spring from drying up. Juanito tried to help Joseph, persuading him to ask Father Angelo to pray for rain. After the priest would not assent, Joseph left to go back to the rock, but not until he had blessed Juanito's son by telling him to grow strong. Because Joseph preferred to be alone, Juanito did not return with him to the spring.[18] Juanito's actions were motivated partly by free will and partly by circumstances. He truly had no choice in killing Benjy, but he chose to return to the valley afterwards.

Juanito told Joseph about Willie, a feeble-minded ranch worker who was afraid of hard ground with holes in it. He dreamed that men pulled him to pieces in such a place. One day he saw the moon through a telescope; he saw the place he had feared and he could not live. He hanged himself because, as Juanito explained, "It had been all right when he thought it was a dream, but when he saw the place was really there, and not a dream he couldn't stand it to live."[19] Poor Willie's fate was determined by his low intelligence and the accident of looking through the telescope. Truly he was a victim of his heredity and environment.

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[18] Ibid., p. 312. [19] Ibid., p. 298.

Ritual sacrifice played an important part in To a God Unknown. Joseph offered bits of meat and wine to the oak tree until Burton killed it. Joseph and Thomas met an old man at the sea where the mists of the ocean prevented the drought from penetrating. Each day the old man sacrificed some small animal as the sun went down, explaining that he was the last man to see the sunset in the new world. Joseph understood when the old man stated the real reason for his sacrifice: "I do this because it makes me glad. I do it because I like to."[20] Actually, the man's ritual of sacrifice had no reason outside his own mind. His action had no cause, and he therefore was a free agent. His actions, however, influenced Joseph, who remembered that the old man had said that at the perfect time he would sacrifice himself.[21] When Joseph retreated to the pines to protect the spring, he first sacrificed a calf after the spring became dry. When this sacrifice did not bring water, he cut his own wrists. The novel ended on a note of hope because the rain did come as Joseph slowly bled to death. Steinbeck writes, "'I should have known,' he whispered. 'I am the rain. . . . I am the land, . . . and I am the rain. The grass will grow out of me in a little while.'"[21]

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[20] Ibid., p. 266. [21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid., p. 322.

These Emersonian thoughts echo those Joseph had uttered before. After he and Elizabeth were married, he told her that "there are times when the people and the hills and the earth, all, everything except the stars are one, and the love of the all is strong like a sadness."[23] Later he told the tree, "All things are one, and all a part of me."[24] Rama, the seer, explained this part of Joseph to Elizabeth:

> "I tell you this man is not a man, unless he is all men. The strength, the resistance, the long and stumbling thinking of all men, and all the joy and suffering, too, cancelling each other out and yet remaining in the contents. He is all these, a repository of each man's soul, and more than that, a symbol of the earth's soul."[25]

Even though Joseph felt that he was a part of the Oversoul, he did not possess the free will of transcendentalism. Because of his psychological makeup and because of the circumstances of his life, he had no choice in his actions.

In To a God Unknown Steinbeck blames neither Joseph nor Benjy for immorality. In addition to such an amoral attitude toward character and incident, the naturalist portrays characters and actions that are primitive, animalistic and violent.

The critics have said that Steinbeck's earlier novels possess this characteristic but that the incidence is

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[23] Ibid., p. 103. [24] Ibid., p. 113.

[25] Ibid., p. 121.

smaller in his later works. Tortilla Flat has been classed as an animalistic book.

Even though Tortilla Flat is mock heroic in tone, a discerning reader can easily pick out comments that are against society throughout the book. The paisanos themselves were free of society's sins at the beginning. Steinbeck writes:

> The paisanos are clean of commercialism, free of the complicated system of American business, and, having nothing that can be stolen, exploited or mortgaged, that system has not attacked them very vigorously.[26]

But Danny, the King Arthur of the paisanos, inherited property and thereby had something that society could exploit.

Immediately afterwards Danny's character changed so much that he insulted everyone. Pilon saw the change immediately:

> "When one is poor, one thinks, 'If I had money I would share it with my good friends.' But let money come and charity flies away. So it is with thee, my once-friend. Thou art lifted above thy friends. Thou art a man of property."[27]

To help Danny with his great responsibility, Pilon agreed to rent the second house for an imaginary $15 a month. Thus, "Danny became a great man, having a house to rent, and Pilon went up the social scale by renting a

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[26] Steinbeck, Tortilla Flat, pp. vii-viii.

[27] Ibid., p. 15.

house."[28] This social rise was only in the eyes of others, because Danny was really relieved when the second house burned. Steinbeck comments:

> Danny had indulged in a little conventional anger against careless friends, had mourned for a moment over the transitory quality of earthly property which made spiritual property so valuable. He had thought over the ruin of his status as a man with a house to rent; and, all this clutter of necessary and decent emotion having been satisfied and cleared away, he had finally slipped into his true emotion, one of relief that at least one of his burdens was removed.[29]

He still had one house, and all his friends, the Knights of the Round Table, moved in with him. They offered him companionship, regular meals, and help in his amorous adventures. These social advantages did not make Danny happy.

> When Danny thought of the old lost time, he could taste again how good the stolen food was, and he longed for that old time again. Since his inheritance had lifted him, he had not fought often. He had been drunk, but not adventurously so. Always the weight of the house was upon him; always the responsibility of his friends.[30]

This weight was too much for Danny; so he finally crowded the adventures of a lifetime into a few weeks, using the money he received selling items to Torrelli, the pawn broker. His friends tried to save him by giving him a party, but Danny did not want to be saved. His escapades

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[28] Ibid., p. 21.

[29] Ibid., p. 44.

[30] Ibid., pp. 131-132.

at the party, the author tells us, were gargantuan, and his challenge to fight a duel with The Enemy outside the houses ended with his being mortally injured by his fall into the ravine.[31] Perhaps The Enemy represented Society because defying it caused Danny's death.

All of Tortilla Flat went to Danny's funeral--except his friends. They did not have the proper clothes and could not defy society by going to the funeral in rags.[32] Even the society of Tortilla Flat circumscribed a man's actions. The paisanos, too, had rules of their own. They punished Big Joe Portagee for stealing The Pirate's money after he had turned it over to Danny for safekeeping.[33] In this society one did not steal from trusting souls like The Pirate.

The Pirate was primitive in intelligence; his head had not grown with his body.[34] He loved his dogs who followed him around every day and was saving his money to buy a gold candlestick for St. Francis to fulfill a vow concerning a dog. When The Pirate finally saved enough money to fulfill his vow, his dogs disgraced him by breaking into church during the dedication service, but they raised his status when they had a vision while The Pirate

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[31] Ibid., p. 152.

[32] Ibid., p. 154.

[33] Ibid., pp. 102-103.

[34] Ibid., p. 48.

was explaining the service to them.[35] The Pirate was an idiot, but a spiritual idiot. He was not violent or animalistic. His actions, however, were circumscribed by his low intelligence.

The paisanos did other good deeds--including helping Senora Teresina Cortez feed her eight mysteriously conceived children. For the first time in their lives the little ones became sick. Finally the lady told the boys that she needed only beans--and beans were forthcoming. The Senora was happy, but she "wondered idly which one of Danny's friends was responsible" for her ninth conception.[36] No condemnation fell on her or the boys who had done their "good deed."

Cooperative ladies were fair game for the paisanos; Big Joe Portagee even found "love" in the street.[37] Danny did go to Mrs. Morales' house, and stayed there even when one of his houses was burning. Jesus Maria tried to make Danny aware of the situation by telling him of the fire and of the presence of the fire department to fight the fire. "'Well,' said Danny, 'if the fire department can't do anything about it, what does Pilon expect me to do?'"[38] The situation was beyond his control; so he went back to

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[35] Ibid., p. 111.
[36] Ibid., p. 119.
[37] Ibid., p. 99.
[38] Ibid., p. 42.

Mrs. Morales.

The cause of the fire was a candle that the boys kept burning when they were sleeping off the effects of too much wine. Fate, however, entered into the accident, too, the author tells us. A candle "you would say, is answerable to certain physical laws and to none other. Its conduct, you would think, was guaranteed by certain principles of heat and combustion."[39] But this particular candle was to be burned for St. Francis and was blessed. "Here is the principle which takes the waxed rod outside the jurisdiction of physics."[40] When Danny asked his friends how the fire started, Pilon guessed they might have enemies; Jesus Maria and Pablo thought God had a hand in it; but since Pablo had bought the candle originally "he suspected the true celestial politics which had caused the burning of the house."[41] He was being chastened for keeping the candle himself. This whole incident of the first fire was out of the control of the paisanos. They were not free agents.

After Danny's death his friends returned to his house and talked about him while they drank wine. Pilon flipped a lighted match.

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[39] Ibid., p. 41. [40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid., p. 47.

> The little burning stick landed on an old newspaper against the wall. Each man started up to stamp it out; and each man was struck with a celestial thought, and settled back. They found one another's eyes and smiled the wise smiles of the deathless and hopeless ones. In a reverie they watched the flame flicker and nearly die, and sprout to life again. . . . Thus do the gods speak with tiny causes.[42]

The paisanos thus believed that the burning of the second house was fated: "better that this symbol of holy friendship . . . should die as Danny died, in one last glorious hopeless assault on the gods."[43]

Tortilla Flat showed the free will of the paisanos in some of their actions, but the ending was deterministic. The motivation of Danny's break with society of the outside world and the society of his friends was not his free will. He was forced by his instinct to try to return to the old way. He fought for his free will, but lost.

Steinbeck's first strike novel, In Dubious Battle, was dominated by statements against society, violence, and human-animal allusions. The young hero, Jim Nolan, felt that society put a cage around the individual. "Nothing I ever did before had any meaning," he said. "It was just a mess. I don't think I resented the fact that someone profited from the mess, but I did hate being in the rat cage."[44] When Mac, the party organizer, told him that he might get

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[42] Ibid., p. 158. [43] Ibid.

[44] Steinbeck, In Dubious Battle, p. 25.

hurt in the effort to organize and carry out the strike, Jim replied, "I don't mind getting smacked on the chin. I just don't want to get nibbled to death. There's a difference."[45] This difference is being a pawn for society to push around or being a knight who can be killed by society because he makes a stand. Jim chose to be the knight.

As the strike progressed, Mac became increasingly pessimistic about the outcome. He told Jim how strong the opposition was:

> "They got this valley organized. God, how they've got it organized. It's not so hard to do when a few men control everything, land, courts, banks. They can cut off loans, and they can railroad a man to jail, and they can bribe plenty."[46]

The forces against the strikers were strong, and the strike itself was doomed to failure. The life these men had to live was brutal, and the author made many animalistic comparisons. Describing a communist worker to Jim, Mac said, "Joy's got no more sense than a bullfrog."[47] Jim told Mac about his home life: "My old man was fighting just like a cat in a corner with a pack of dogs around. Sooner or later a dog was sure to kill him; but he fought anyway."[48]

Old Dan, who had been a topper with a lumber company but was now only another apple picker, was just as

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[45] Ibid., p. 39.
[46] Ibid., pp. 167-168.
[47] Ibid., p. 23.
[48] Ibid., p. 24.

pessimistic and animalistic in his description of life:

> "I've lived seventy-one years with dogs and men, and mostly I seen 'em try to steal the bone from each other. I never seen two dogs help each other break a bone; but I seen 'em chew hell out of each other tryin' to steal it."[49]

Later when the strike was in progress and the men were camped on Anderson's place, Mac commented, "I wonder how men know when food's ready, kind of mind reading, I guess. Or maybe they've got that same kind of a sense that vultures have."[50]

The men on both sides acted violently, like animals. The vigilantes killed Joy, who somehow had come on the train with the strike breakers.[51] Al Anderson's lunch wagon was burned in retaliation for his father's allowing the strikers to camp on his land.[52] The strikers ruthlessly attacked some apple pickers who had not joined the strike,[53] and Mac broke the nose of a young boy from the opposing side who was caught by the strikers.[54] Anderson's barn was burned by the vigilantes,[55] and the house of the superintendent was burned by the strikers.[56] They not only fought the vigilantes, but the strikers fought each other. One

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[49] Ibid., p. 71.
[50] Ibid., p. 187.
[51] Ibid., p. 163.
[52] Ibid., p. 172.
[53] Ibid., p. 180.
[54] Ibid., p. 272.
[55] Ibid., p. 260.
[56] Ibid., p. 276.

of the strikers accused London, the leader, of eating canned goods while the men were starving. Steinbeck writes:

> . . . with the terrible smooth speed of a heavy man, London lanced with his left hand and, as Burke ducked, the great right fist caught him on the side of the jaw, lifted him clear, and cropped him. His head hung over the edge of the platform, broken jaw turned sideways, shattered teeth hanging loosely between his lips. A thin stream of blood flowed from his mouth, besides his nose and eye, and disappeared into his hair.[57]

This blood excited the mob, even though their cause was lost. They left to charge the road block just as Mac awoke from a short nap. He agreed with Jim that the mob was a big animal: "It's different from the men in it. And it's stronger than all the men put together." He continued:

> "Trouble is, guys that study people always think it's men, and it isn't men. It's a different kind of animal. It's as different from men as dogs are. . . . When it gets started it might do anything."[58]

Doc Burton, the doctor who helped the strikers, had said almost the same thing when he was talking to Mac and Jim about the group men. "They seem to me to be a new individual, not at all like single men," Doc said. "A man in a group isn't himself at all. He's a cell in an organism that isn't like him any more than the cells in your body are like you."[59] Doc was interested in seeing the whole picture. He didn't want to be blinded by labels of good and bad on

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[57] Ibid., p. 314. [58] Ibid., p. 317.

[59] Ibid., pp. 144-145.

things.[60] To Jim Mac called Doc "a queer kind of duck, not a party man, but he works all the time for the group."[61] Doc explained his position towards the strikers:

> "I guess I just believe they're men, and not animals. Maybe if I went into a kennel and the dogs were hungry, and sick and dirty, and maybe if I could help those dogs I would. Wouldn't be their fault they were that way. You couldn't say, 'Those dogs are that way because they haven't any ambition. They don't save their bones. Dogs always are that way.' No, you'd try to clean them up and feed them. I guess that's the way it is with me. I have some skill in helping men, and when I see some who need help, I just do it. I don't think about it much."[62]

Doc, who seemed to be Steinbeck's voice, did not judge the strikers nor did he try to justify his own actions in helping them. Essentially, Doc helped the strikers because he wanted to and because they needed help. The animalistic terms in which he describes the strikers seem deterministic, but Doc's actions were a result of his free will.

Doc questioned the use of violence to carry on the strike. He told Jim that he wished he knew a good thing would grow from the struggle. He continued, "But in my little experience the end is never very different in its nature from the means. Damn it, Jim, you can only build a violent thing with violence."[63] He was also pessimistic about the whole history of man, as he explained to Jim:

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[60] Ibid., p. 143.
[61] Ibid., p. 95.
[62] Ibid., p. 195.
[63] Ibid., p. 253.

> "It seems to me that man has engaged in a blind and fearful struggle out of a past he can't remember, into a future he can't foresee nor understand. And man has met and defeated every obstacle, every enemy except one. He cannot win over himself. How mankind hates itself."[64]

Doc identified the holy light in Jim's eyes and the good feeling in his heart as religious. Jim scoffed at this idea but asked Doc if he had had the feeling of love for the men--"like troops and troops marching into you? And you closing around them?" Doc answered that he sometimes had that feeling, "particularly when they've done something stupid, when a man's made a mistake and died for it."[65] The ability to make a mistake implies that a man has free will. Whether the author is thinking of Doc or Jim or neither is not clear, since both of them died because of their association with the strikers.

Mac lived, however, to continue the struggle. In the middle of the strike, Doc Burton characterized him: "Mac . . . you're the craziest mess of cruelty and haus-frau sentimentality, of clear vision and rose-colored glasses I ever saw. I don't know how you manage to be all of them at once."[66] Mac's cruelty in beating up the young boy, his using both Joy's death and Jim's body to stir up the men, his coldness in writing off as necessary Anderson's probable

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[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid., p. 200.

[66] Ibid., p. 206.

punishment from the landowners because he helped the strikers--these were only part of the picture. He told Jim his vision of the strike before they left the city, and he was very accurate:

> "Now we start our strike, and Torgas County gets itself an ordinance that makes congregation unlawful. Now what happens? We congregate the men. A bunch of sheriff's men try to push them around and that starts a fight. There's nothing like a fight to cement the men together. Well, then the owners start a vigilantes committee. . . . Well, the vigilantes start shooting. If they knock over some of the tramps we have a public funeral; and after that, we get some real action. . . . The troops win, all right! But every time a guardsman jabs a fruit tramp with a bayonet a thousand men all over the country come on our side."[67]

Jim picked up Mac's optimism and his belief in the cause. As the strike progressed Mac became more and more pessimistic and Jim had to reassure him--the pupil leading the teacher. Both Mac and Jim were free agents who directed the strikers. The outcome of the strike was not reported, but the reader knows that the forces of society pitted against the strikers were too strong to lose.

As the end of the strike in In Dubious Battle was determined by the strength of the opposition, the end of Of Mice and Men was determined by the heredity and environment of Lennie and George, the two major characters.

Lennie was an idiot who felt remorse after he had done a "bad thing." He was sorry that he killed the puppy

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[67] Ibid., pp. 32-33.

and knew that killing Curley's wife was "another bad thing."[68] Even if these feelings of remorse were motivated by the fear that George wouldn't let him tend the rabbits if he was bad, they indicated that Lennie was more than an animal.[69] Lennie's fate, however, was determined by his heredity and environment. Since his body was powerful but his brain was weak, he was doomed to destruction or imprisonment.

George could not condemn Lennie for killing Curley's wife. He tried to explain this to Curley: "The poor bastard's nuts. Don't shoot 'em. He didn't know what he was doin'." Although the reader can understand that this is true, Curley could not. He organized a posse to kill Lennie.[70]

Curley, strange to say, was pushed by heredity, too, because he was small in stature. Candy, the old swamper, explained this to George soon after he and Lennie came to the ranch: "Curley's like a lot of little guys. He hates big guys. He's alla time picking scraps with big guys. Kind of like he's mad at 'em because he ain't a big guy."[71] George understood immediately that Lennie must not "tangle

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[68] Steinbeck, Of Mice and Men, p. 158.

[69] Ibid., p. 148. [70] Ibid., p. 169.

[71] Ibid., p. 49.

with" Curley. Lennie was a "big guy" that Curley did resent.

Curley was angry with the men for ridiculing his special attentions to his wife and attacked Lennie for smiling. Curley did not know that Lennie was only remembering the talk about the farm where he would tend the rabbits, nor did the boss's son realize the terrible strength of Lennie. At first Lennie was too frightened to defend himself and was badly beaten by Curley. After George told him to "get him," Lennie grabbed Curley's hand and crushed it. When George finally forced him to release the hand, Lennie was afraid that his fight would result in their dismissal. Slim, the wise mule skinner, advised Curley to say that his hand was caught in a machine because the men would ridicule him if he tried to get Lennie and George fired. Curley's ego forced him to agree.[72]

His wife did not believe the story, however, and suspected that Lennie was the cause of Curley's mangled hand. She told Lennie, "O.K., Machine. I'll talk to you later. I like machines."[73] George had already told Lennie that Curley's wife represented trouble and for him to leave her alone. Her interest in being near the men had been described to George: "Ever' time the guys is around she

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[72] Ibid., p. 114. [73] Ibid., p. 139.

shows up. She's looking for Curley, or she thought she lef' somethin' layin' around and she's lookin' for it. Seems like she can't keep away from guys."[74] This tendency, her vanity, and her admiration for brute strength caused her death.

Environmental forces were part of George's trouble. Since he was with Lennie, the idiot's problems became his concern. George told Lennie: "God, you're a lot of trouble. . . . I could get along so easy and so nice if I didn't have you on my tail. I could live so easy and maybe have a girl."[75] Later he continued the same thought:

> "An' whatta I got. . . . I got you! You can't keep a job and you lose me ever' job I get. Jus' keep me shovin' all over the country all the time. . . . You do bad things and I got to get you out."[76]

However, George felt the pressures of society as well as the temporary bitterness towards Lennie: "Guys like us, that work on ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world. They got no family. They don't belong no place. . . . They got nothing to look forward to."[77]

The unreasoning pressures of society had forced them to leave Weed because the girl in the red dress had accused Lennie of attempted rape even though he only grabbed her dress. The mob would have lynched Lennie if the two men

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[74] Ibid., p. 91. [75] Ibid., p. 17.
[76] Ibid., pp. 23-24. [77] Ibid., p. 28.

had not run away.[78] This same threat caused Crooks, the Negro stable buck, to fear Curley's wife. She became angry because he asked her to leave his room when Lennie and Candy were talking to him about the farm they and George planned to buy. Crooks had momentarily considered joining them to help them hoe, but Curley's wife killed this hope to rise above his subordinate position. After her threat Crooks "had reduced himself to nothing. There was no personality, no ego--nothing to arouse like or dislike."[79] The forces of society won again because Crooks "decided" not to join the men. Crooks could not use his free will.

There is really no hope in Of Mice and Men. The reader knows from the beginning that Lennie will "do something bad" that will bring about his destruction and the death of the dream of having a place with George where they will "live off the fat of the land." As soon as Curley's wife entered the story, we know that she will be connected with this destruction and death. Of course, the killing of Candy's dog obviously foreshadowed George's killing of Lennie. Although George walked off with Slim at the end of the novel, there is no hope for the realization of his dream of owning a place of his own.

Slim was one character in the novel that decided his

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[78] Ibid., p. 75. [79] Ibid., p. 141.

own actions and dictated the actions of others. His innate authority was exemplified by the "gravity in his manner and a quiet so profound that all talk stopped when he spoke. His authority was so great that his word was taken on any subject, be it politics or love."[80] Slim agreed with Carlson that Candy must shoot his old dog, telling the owner that the dog wasn't any good to himself. "I wisht somebody'd shoot me if I get old and crippled," he continued.[81] Slim also realized that George had shot Lennie to save the idiot from imprisonment or death by mob action, rather than to punish him for killing Curley's wife. "You hadda, George. I swear you hadda," Slim told him as he walked away to get a drink.[82]

Ma Joad in The Grapes of Wrath had a similar role of authority in her family. Old Tom, her husband, did not set the tone of the family attitude or make major decisions without the help of Ma. Steinbeck relates:

> She seemed to know, to accept, to welcome her position, the citadel of the family, the strong place that could not be taken. And since Old Tom and the children could not know hurt or fear unless she acknowledged hurt and fear, she had practiced denying them in herself. . . . She seemed to know that if she swayed the family shook, and if she ever really deeply wavered or despaired the family will to function would be

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[80] Ibid., p. 62. [81] Ibid., p. 81.

[82] Ibid., pp. 169, 186.

gone.[83]

Ma decided that they would take Casy,[84] that the family would not break up because the Wilson's car broke down,[85] and that they would get to California, despite the fact that Granma died in the truck during the night.[86] Her faith in the progress of the common people was the dominating philosophy of the book. She told Tom, her son, when the California authorities seemed to be winning:

> "You got to have patience. Why, Tom--us people will go on livin' when all them people is gone. Why, Tom, we're the people that live. They ain't gonna wipe us out. Why, we're the people--we go on."[87]

When Casy was killed and Tom was hiding out, Ma reiterated this optimism: "Ever' thing we do--seems to me is aimed at goin' on. Seems that way to me. Even gettin' hungry--even bein' sick; some die; but the rest is tougher. Jus' try to live the day, jus' the day."[88] This optimism is out of place in a naturalistic novel which is pessimistic about man's capabilities. The Grapes of Wrath is not pessimistic in philosophy, though it is definite in condemning society. Steinbeck describes the owners of the Oklahoma farms:

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[83] Steinbeck, The Grapes of Wrath, p. 100.

[84] Ibid., p. 139.

[85] Ibid., p. 232.

[86] Ibid., p. 311.

[87] Ibid., p. 383.

[88] Ibid., pp. 577-578.

> Some of the owner men were kind because they hated what they had to do, and some of them were angry because they hated to be cruel, and some of them were cold because they had long ago found that one could not be an owner unless one were cold. And all of them were caught in something larger than themselves.[89]

This force was socio-economic. Because the land had been poorly farmed, because of the drought, and because of the machine age, the owners had to evict the Okies.

The drivers of the tractors that tore down the houses and plowed the fields were agents of this economic fact. One tenant tried to reason with one driver: "We all got to figure. There's some way to stop this. It's not like lightning or earthquakes. We've got a bad thing made by men, and by God that's something we can change."[90] The driver would not change it

> because the monster that built the tractor, the monster that sent the tractor out, had somehow got into the driver's hands, into his brain and muscle, had . . . goggled his mind, muzzled his speech, goggled his perception, muzzled his perception.[91]

So the Okies were driven off their land.

They drove to California but were pushed by society. The car dealers and junk dealers took advantage of their necessity to have transportation and money. One of the Okies almost bought a worthless tire from a car dealer. His friend said philosophically:

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[89] Ibid., p. 42. [90] Ibid., p. 52.

[91] Ibid., p. 48.

> "Fella in business got to lie and cheat, but he calls it somepin else. That's what's important. You go steal a tire and you're a thief, but he tried to steal your four dollars for a busted tire. They call that sound business."[92]

The forces of society are evil because they prey upon the weak, the unsuccessful, the poor. Their evil was a determining factor in the life of the Okies who were moving because they had to. "That's why folks always move. Movin' 'cause they want somepin better 'n what they got. An' that's the on'y way they'll git it," said Casy.[93] However, the better thing the Okies wanted was not in California. California society was as hostile and violent for them as it had been for the strikers of In Dubious Battle.

The Okies did not create this hostility; it was there before they arrived. At the first Hooverville the Joads learned that there was no work for a living wage. The police were on the side of the owners and used violence to control the migrants. They threatened to burn down Hooverville, arrested Casy, and caused Tom to hide out for awhile. They also had contempt for the decency shown the migrants at the government camps.[94]

These camps were the only ones in which the campers were treated like human beings and given the right to govern themselves. The Joads liked the one at Weedpatch but had to

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[92] Ibid., p. 54.

[93] Ibid., p. 173.

[94] Ibid., p. 404.

move out because they could not find work.[95]

The Joads were victims of the socio-economic trap and their strength was the main reason they did not give up the struggle. Weak men like Noah, their first-born son, and Connie, Rose of Sharon's husband, could not stand the strain. They left the family.[96] Tom Joad was one of the strong.

Tom, however, doubted his own free will when he told Jim Casy that going to jail made no sense to him. His four years in prison should have taught him not to kill someone who threatened to kill him or it should have frightened him into self-control. It did neither, however. Tom said, "If Herb or anybody else come for me, I'd do her again. Do her before I could figure her out. Specially if I was drunk. That sort of senselessness kind a worries a man."[97] Tom is implying that some primitive instinct would take over the process of thought and he would have no control over it.

When the test came he was right about himself. After the vigilantes killed Jim Casy for leading the peach pickers' strike, Tom immediately killed Casy's murderer.[98] After time for reflection, Tom decided to be a disciple of Jim Casy's doctrine and work for the improvement of the lot of the common people.

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[95] Ibid., p. 479.

[96] Ibid., pp. 284, 372.

[97] Ibid., p. 74.

[98] Ibid., p. 527.

Jim had been a journeyman preacher but had felt so guilty about his having to lie with a girl after a revival that he had stopped preaching. In the wilderness, though, he looked at the situation through different eyes: "I says, 'Maybe it ain't a sin: maybe it's just the way folks is. Maybe we been whipping the hell out of ourselves for nothin'." He decided:

> "There ain't no sin and there ain't no virtue. There's just stuff people do. It's all part of the same thing. And some of the things folks do is nice, and some ain't nice, but that's as far as any man got a right to say."[99]

Perhaps Casy's conclusion does have an element of judgment in it. It is difficult to see the difference between "sin" and something "not nice."

Casy told Tom that the Holy Spirit was all men and women--the human spirit. "Maybe all men got one big soul ever'body's a part of," he continued.[100] Later he explained that while he was in the wilderness he wondered why he was praying. He explained, "There was the hills, an' there was me, an' we wasn't separate no more. We was one thing. An' that one thing was holy."[101] Even more than Joseph in To a God Unknown, Casy is a follower of Emerson. The preacher believed that the joining of people in a group was holy.

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[99] Ibid., p. 32. [100] Ibid., pp. 32-33.

[101] Ibid., p. 110.

> "An' it only got unholy when one mis'able little fella got the bit in his teeth an' run off his own way, kickin' and fightin'. But when they're all workin' together, not one fella for another fella, but one fella kind of harnessed to the whole shebang--that's right, that's holy."[102]

But the powerful group animal in In Dubious Battle and the good group animal in The Grapes of Wrath are agents of determinism. The individual free will is absorbed and obliterated in the general will.

The author shows us examples of the people "harnessed to the whole shebang" by describing the Okies' trip to California. In the camps along the side of the road the migrants cleaved together.

> The families learned what rights must be observed--the right of privacy in the tent; the right to keep the past black hidden in the heart; the right to talk and to listen; the right to refuse help or accept, to offer help or to decline it. . . . And the families learned, although no one told them, what rights are monstrous and must be destroyed: the right to intrude upon privacy, the right to be noisy while the camp slept, the right of seduction or rape, the right of adultery and theft and murder. These rights were crushed because the little worlds could not exist for even a night with such rights alive.[103]

The individual will was subordinated into the group will for the good of the whole.

This general will is associated with Ma Joad's belief that the people will go on, that they will progress despite the current social situation that seemed to retard the

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[102] Ibid.

[103] Ibid., p. 265.

growth of the common people. The author gives us this optimistic view in one of the impersonal interchapters:

> This you may say of man--when theories change, and clash, when schools, philosophies, when narrow dark alleys of thought national, religious, economic, grow and disintegrate, man reaches, stumbles forward, painfully sometimes. Having stepped forward, he may slip back, but only half a step, never a full step back.[104]

In another interchapter, Steinbeck describes the slow, painful progress of a land turtle down an embankment to the highway. Once there, it was almost hit by several cars, but still it slowly traveled towards the southwest. Tom Joad captured this turtle, and carried it for awhile. Later Tom let the turtle loose; attacked by a cat, the turtle retreated under its shell until the cat became tired. After that, the turtle continued on its sure course toward the southwest.[105]

Of course, this turtle represented the sure progress of man, and it was a symbolic picture of the Joads' troubles and continuing journey. This optimism is similar to Mac's hope in In Dubious Battle for the eventual success of the working man.

Like that first book about the strikers, The Grapes of Wrath ends without the Joads succeeding in finding a job for a living wage. Their troubles seemed multiplied: Tom had left to carry on Casy's work, Rose of Sharon's baby was

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[104] Ibid., p. 205. [105] Ibid., p. 60.

stillborn, and the rain drowned out their truck and caused them to leave their boxcar-home. This hopeless situation was relieved only symbolically by Rose of Sharon's giving the starving man her dead baby's milk. He could not retain anything else on his stomach; because of her act he would live.[106] The people will go on. Just as the turtle showe , just as Ma said--the eventual outcome of the class struggle is victory for the poor, oppressed working man. Since the author believes that this victory is predestined, the theme of The Grapes of Wrath is deterministic, but not in the literary naturalist's sense. Steinbeck's determinism in this novel is optimistic. Unlike Of Mice and Men, there is hope that the migrants eventually will realize their dreams.

This optimism, however, had its trials, just as the progress of the turtle had its temporary reversals. The Okies were driven by the primitive impulses of fear, hunger, and sex almost as much as the Russians in a Tolstoy play. Muley Graves, the stubborn Okie who refused to leave the land, told Tom and Casy that being hunted like an animal changed a man. "Somepin happens to you. You ain't strong; maybe you're fierce, but you ain't strong,"[107] Muley said. Because he was hunted, he was afraid. Muley's refusal to leave the land shows his free will, but his hunted state

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[106] Ibid., p. 619.

[107] Ibid., p. 78.

was outside his control. No longer did he decide his own fate.

The rules of the good society also circumvented Muley's actions. When he saw Tom and Casy, he had some rabbits that he had caught. The two men asked him if they could eat some of his catch because they were hungry. Muley replied, "I ain't got no choice in the matter. . . . I mean . . . if a fella's got somepin to eat an' another fella's hungry--why the first fella ain't got no choice. . . ."[108] This humanitarian impulse was shared by Ma Joad at the first Hooverville in California. As she cooked the family's meal, hungry children gathered around the fire. Although Ma believed that feeding the family was her first obligation, she must leave some stew in the pot for the children. She, also, had no choice.[109]

The fear of Muley, the hunger of the children, the realistic language and crude actions of the Joads, and the powerful sex drives of Al and the preacher seem to be characteristics of a naturalistic novel. But these basic urges are leavened in this novel by the brotherhood of man, the fatherhood of the Oversoul, and the sure progress of the common people.

A Calvinistic sense of personal sin motivated Uncle

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[108] Ibid., p. 66. [109] Ibid., p. 351.

John. He had always blamed himself because his wife had died of appendicitis after he would not take her to a doctor. Tom explained his uncle to Casy:

> "He figures it's his fault his woman died. Funny fella. He's all the time makin' it up to somebody--givin' kids stuff, droppin' a sack of meal on somebody's porch. Give away about ever'thing he got, an' he still ain't very happy."[110]

As the troubles mounted for the Joads on their trek to California, Uncle John believed that his sin was the cause. Casy told him, "Well . . . for anybody else it was a mistake, if you think it was a sin--then it's a sin. A fella builds his own sins right up from the groun'."[111] Uncle John, like Burton in To a God Unknown, believed in the Old Testament God, who is a determining force in one's life. Casy, like Doc Burton in In Dubious Battle, considered man's will free to make a mistake.

Uncle John felt his own sin, but the woman at the Weedpatch camp damned the sins of others, especially the dancing in the camp on Saturday night. She told Rose of Sharon that her baby would be marked if she sinned. When Rose asked Ma about it, Ma told her sternly, "You're just one person, an' they's a lot of other folks. You git to your proper place." She continued, "Jes' shut up an' git to work. You ain't big enough or mean enough to worry God

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[110] Ibid., p. 92. [111] Ibid., p. 306

much."[112] Thus, Ma believed as Casy did; but Rose of Sharon was beginning to agree with Uncle John. Later the girl thought that Tom's killing Casy's murderer would ruin her baby.[113] However, when the baby was born dead, she blamed neither Tom nor herself. Rose of Sharon was influenced more by Ma's practical philosophy than by the Weedpatch woman or Uncle John.

Jim Casy's belief that all things are holy is repeated by Steinbeck in his introduction to Cannery Row.

> Its inhabitants are, as the man once said, "whores, pimps, gamblers, and sons of bitches," by which he meant Everybody. Had the man looked through another peephole he might have said, "Saints and angels and martyrs and holy men," and he would have meant the same thing.[114]

The author's feeling against society is indirectly shown in the simple vignette about two young boys, Joey and Willard. Joey's father had taken rat poison because he could not get a job. The day after he died, a man came to offer him a job.[115] This ironic touch is suitable to the tone of Cannery Row which on the surface celebrates the life of the misfits of society--the bums, the prostitutes, and the "oddballs."

Mack, the leader of the bums, used a peculiar form of persuasion to convince Lee Chong, the Chinese store

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[112] Ibid., p. 426. [113] Ibid., p. 537.

[114] Steinbeck, Cannery Row, p. 273. [115] Ibid., p. 346.

keeper, to rent Lee's warehouse for living quarters. Mack wondered how Lee would prevent the windows from being knocked out or the building from being burned. Lee, knowing that Mack could do these things, decided that he had no choice; he must allow Mack and the boys to move in, realizing, however, that they could not pay the $5 a week rent. Since they did not steal from him after the transaction, he believed that he had made a good bargain.[116] Mack's tactics and their success indicate that he was a free agent, a master of his own particular world.

However, after the boys ruined Doc's laboratory by giving him a "shindig" that he did not attend, Mack related to Doc something of his past life:

> "It don't do no good to say I'm sorry. I been sorry all my life. This ain't no new thing. It's always like this . . . . I had a wife. . . . Same thing. Ever'thing I done turned sour. She couldn't stand it any more. If I done a good thing it got poisoned up some way. . . . Same thing ever' place 'til I just got to clowning. I don't do nothin' but clown no more. Try to make the boys laugh."[117]

Mack in this case did not feel that he was a free agent. Because of his early failure at a normal life, he was conditioned to expect little from his present life. Environmental influences had molded his character.

Hazel, whose mother had been too busy to notice his sex until she had become used to his name, was not influenced

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[116] Ibid., p. 277. [117] Ibid., p. 331.

by his environment at all. Steinbeck writes:

> Hazel grew up--did four years in grammar school, four years in reform school, and didn't learn anything in either place. Reform schools are supposed to teach viciousness and criminality but Hazel didn't pay enough attention. He came out of reform school as innocent of viciousness as he was of fractions and long division.[118]

Although Hazel's mental capacity limited his actions, society could neither teach nor corrupt him.

Doc, who is reminiscent of Doc Burton in In Dubious Battle, was a marine scientist living in Cannery Row. On July 4 after the party fiasco, Doc remarked to a friend about Mack and the boys:

> "There are your true philosophers. I think . . . that Mack and the boys know everything that has ever happened in the world and possibly everything that will happen. I think they survive in this particular world better than other people. . . . All our so-called successful men are sick men, with bad stomachs, and bad souls. Mack and the boys are healthy and curiously clean. They can do what they want. They can satisfy their appetites without calling them something else."[119]

To Doc, the boys represented the last remnant of men who do what they want to do and not what society demands. They are truly free agents.

Just as in Tortilla Flat, the seemingly anti-society characters had a true society with rules for their behaviour. They could steal the whiskey for Doc's party, but they knew he would not like it. Mack distrusted their motives for

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[118] Ibid., p. 286.

[119] Ibid., p. 335.

giving the party and remarked that the five of them would drink five times more than Doc at his own party. He explained, "I'd just like to give him something when I didn't get most of it back."[120] The other boys convinced Mack, however, that they could not simply give Doc the whiskey because the other citizens of the Row would probably get most of it anyway. After the boys caught the frogs, they had a glorious party with the land owner, whose wife was away. Their host had passed out when Mack asked corroboration of the gifts of a jug of whiskey and his pick of the litter of pups. Mack explained, "I never did roll a drunk and I ain't gonna start now."[121] These incidents indicate that the rules of the society of bums influenced their lives. They had banded together, just as the campers had in The Grapes of Wrath, and governed themselves with their own rules.

Perhaps the most law-abiding citizen, except in public morality, in the Row was Dora, the madam of the Bear Flag. As Steinbeck writes: "Being against the law, at least against its letter, she must be twice as law-abiding as anyone else. There must be no drunks, no fighting, no vulgarity, or they close Dora up."[122] Like all of Steinbeck's madams except Kate in East of Eden, Dora was kind to

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[120] Ibid., p. 308.

[121] Ibid., p. 314.

[122] Ibid., p. 279.

her girls and was concerned about the welfare of the community. During the depression she had paid grocery bills for the hard-hit families,[123] and during the influenza epidemic she organized the girls as grey ladies to take soup to families and sit up with sick children, in addition to doing their regular work in a busy season.[124] Dora was a good woman who used her free will. The pressures of outside society influenced her in making financial contributions to philanthropic causes, but her private good deeds were her free choice.

One instance of an inevitable cause-effect relationship concerned William, the pimp in Dora's Bear Flag. William brooded over his life and decided to kill himself. Nobody believed him at first, not even the Greek who was frying pork chops when William told him of his plan. Gradually William saw that the Greek's eyes had changed from amusement to worry. Steinbeck writes:

> And William saw the change, saw first how the Greek knew he could do it. And then the Greek knew he would do it. As soon as he saw that in the Greek's eyes William knew he had to do it. He was sad because now it seemed silly. His hand rose and the ice pick snapped into his heart. It was amazing how easily it went in.[125]

The Greek's belief caused William's act. The pimp believed

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[123] Ibid., p. 280.

[124] Ibid., p. 316.

[125] Ibid., p. 281.

that he had no choice in his actions.

Uncaused action is also discussed in Cannery Row. Just like the old man at the sea in To a God Unknown, Doc did things simply because he wanted to. At one time he had been walking from Chicago to Florida. Seeing him, the people did not believe that he was walking because he wanted to see the country, and they did not like him. When Doc told them that he was doing it on a $100 bet, they accepted him into their homes and gave him encouragement. Besides, Doc had a beard. As Steinbeck relates: "You couldn't say you wore a beard because you like a beard. People didn't like you for telling the truth. You had to say you had a scar so you couldn't shave."[126] Since Doc walked because he wanted to and had a beard for the same reason, he was not forced by anything to make his decisions.

After the failure of the first party, evil entered the lives of the citizens of the Row. In addition to calamities of nature, a man lost both legs under a train; the bouncer at Dora's place broke a man's back; and the ladies of Monterey crusaded to close the Bear Flag.[127] Steinbeck writes:

> There is no explaining a series of misfortunes like that. Every man blames himself. People in their black minds remember sins committed secretly and wonder whether they had caused the evil sequence. One man may

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[126] Ibid., p. 318.

[127] Ibid., p. 337.

> put it down to sun spots while another, evoking the law of probabilities, doesn't believe it.[128]

This description has a whiff of Uncle John's Calvinism and a pinch of the Fate that burned down Danny's houses. The author implies that the events generated outside the will of the characters, that something mysterious was the determining factor.

In Sweet Thursday, which continues the story of Doc and Mack and the boys, Steinbeck blames Doc's friends for his illegal actions.

> Doc was a man whose whole direction and impulse was legal and legitimate. Left to his own devices, he would have obeyed every law. . . . The fact that Doc was constantly jockeyed with illicit practices was the fault of his friends--not of himself.[129]

These friends, Mack and the boys, controlled Doc's actions and constituted a determining force in his life in Sweet Thursday.

The action of the novel centered around the efforts of the citizens of the Row to make Doc happy, and it finally narrowed into a concerted drive to push him and Suzy together. Suzy began working at the Bear Flag, which was now managed by Dora's sister (Flora by birth, but now called Fauna). Talking to Doc about Suzy, Fauna said, "She ain't a good hustler because of that streak of lady."[130] After

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[128] Ibid.

[129] Steinbeck, Sweet Thursday, p. 8.

[130] Ibid., p. 87.

the failure of the masquerade party that Mack and the boys give, Suzy left the Bear Flag and became a waitress. Although she loved Doc, she did not want him to be "sandbagged." She wanted him to choose her himself and not be forced by the maneuverings of Fauna or Mack into proposing to her.[131]

Mack did his part by telling Doc that there were three reasons for marrying a hustler--she wouldn't wander because she had done her experimenting, the husband was not likely to surprise or disappoint her, and the only reason for her interest in a man outside of her job was that she liked him.[132]

However, Hazel was the real motivator in the love affair. Since Fauna had read in Hazel's horoscope that he was going to be president of the United States, Hazel had made a mighty effort to listen to the words of conversations, rather than just being content with hearing sounds and tones of voices. Hazel did not want to be president, but his "horoscope closed all doors" of escape.[133] "Mack, who considered life hardly worse than a bad cold,"[134] felt defeated because of the failure of the party to unite Doc and Suzy. He would do nothing, even when Hazel hit him with a piece

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[131] Ibid., p. 78.

[132] Ibid., p. 79.

[133] Ibid., p. 140.

[134] Ibid., p. 141.

of wood to get his attention. "Hazel fought down panic, and then he remembered his Fate--a sacrifice to Washington where he would have to eat oysters. 'All right, Mack,' he said softly. 'I'll have to do her myself.'"[135]

Just as in Cannery Row, Hazel was a free agent environmentally. He decided that the only way to get Doc and Suzy together was for Doc to be injured in some way. Suzy had said that she would help him if he were hurt. One night Hazel broke Doc's arm with a baseball bat, Suzy did offer help, and Suzy and Doc rode off together at the end of the book.[136] This happy ending was directly the result of Hazel's actions.

Sweet Thursday concludes the early Steinbeck works. Even though this novel was written after some of the works discussed in the next chapter, philosophically it belongs with this first group.

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[135] Ibid., p. 142. [136] Ibid., p. 180.

CHAPTER IV

THE LATER STEINBECK

The philosophies of free will and determinism are both found in Steinbeck's later novels, also. Many of the critics have dismissed these works as inferior, but Burning Bright, The Short Reign of Pippin IV, and The Winter of Our Discontent are important to this study, while East of Eden is essential.

Heredity was important in the characters of the unsuccessful play-novelette, Burning Bright. In the first act, the Circus, Joe Saul explained that acrobats were nature spirits once. Like Joseph in To a God Unknown, they lived in the wind and storms. They "troubled the waters and drove the thunder back over the edge," and then flowed over the rocks like the streams and "sailed--arms out--like the wind." Joe Saul was quoting his grandfather, who also said, "Two ancient families they are . . . known and sure and recognized--and only two. Clowns and acrobats. The rest are newcomers."[1] Joe Saul, the farmer in the second act, did not have confidence in Victor, his city-bred farm-hand, because, as Joe Saul told Friend Ed, "You can't be told about the land or read about it. It's got to be in the

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[1]Steinbeck, Burning Bright, p. 26.

blood."[2] For Joe Saul, one's heredity determines one's actions. If the proper genes are not present, one can be neither a successful acrobat nor a farmer.

Because of Joe Saul's attitude about biological heredity, his childlessness was tragic to him. When Friend Ed advised him to go to a doctor, Joe Saul refused, saying that there was "some dark curse" on him.[3] Mordeen, his wife, participated in his grief because of her great love for him. She, however, realized that the cause of Joe Saul's sterility was probably the rheumatic fever he had had years before.[4] Joe Saul could not prevent his lack of children, but Mordeen could.

Although she did not tell Friend Ed exactly what she planned to do, he sensed that she considered conceiving a child by another man for Joe Saul. She gave Friend Ed this hint: "If only two choices and both wrong, and one long waiting and it wrong, too--must I not choose the least wrong of the three?"[5] Since Mordeen made a choice, she had free will.

Victor, the man she selected, was the helper in the acrobat act, the worker on the farm, and the first mate on the ship. Joe Saul had not fully accepted Victor because

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[2] Ibid., p. 78.

[3] Ibid., p. 30.

[4] Ibid., pp. 55-56.

[5] Ibid., p. 60.

he had to think what Victor would do. As Joe Saul told Friend Ed, "His blood is not my blood. He has no ancestry in it."[6]

The society of the small town in which Victor had lived had encouraged him to join the circus. Joe Saul showed contempt for these pressures of society by saying, "And everyone said that you should be on the stage, wasting your time in a small town. Ran away with a circus--the old dream, every little boy's escape."[7] When they were alone, Mordeen tried to explain the society of the circus to Victor:

> "You see, Victor, we're kind of a little world inside a world. . . . Lots of people resent us or envy us, and we're so proud and maybe a little afraid of people. Maybe we protect ourselves too much."[8]

The closed society of the circus prevented Victor's feeling really a part of it, because he was a newcomer. He had no control over this attitude, and his bitterness helped him attack the system by unknowingly succombing to Mordeen's plan for him to father Joe Saul's child.

But Victor's main motivation in all his actions, Steinbeck tells us, was his "unfortunate choice. . . always to mis-see, to mis-hear, to misjudge."[9] He could not understand that a young woman like Mordeen could love an old man

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[6] Ibid., p. 22.

[7] Ibid., p. 37.

[8] Ibid., p. 43.

[9] Ibid., p. 44.

like Joe Saul. She tried to explain her plan to Victor, but gave up and pretended interest in him for himself--finding out about the eye-color, health, and lack of insanity in his family. After his physical heredity was acceptable, she agreed to meet him later.[10]

Of course Joe Saul was happy when he learned of Mordeen's pregnancy, since he only knew two great laws--"that one must live and pass it down."[11] He decided to give the unborn baby a present by getting a medical examination to prove his clean blood. This action was motivated by Joe Saul's interest in biological heredity which he had shown throughout the book. After the baby was born, Joe Saul told Mordeen:

> "I thought my blood must survive--my line--but it's not so. My knowledge, yes--the long knowledge remembered, repeated, the pride, yes, the pride and warmth, Mordeen, warmth and companionship and love so that the loneliness we wear like icy clothes is not always there. These I can give."[12]

Joe Saul accepted the child as belonging to all men: "Every child must have all men as father." He accepted him as their child, and finally as his son.[13] All of these steps involved Joe Saul's free will. He could reject both Mordeen and her child because of the immorality in which the child

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[10] Ibid., pp. 70-71.

[11] Ibid., p. 89.

[12] Ibid., p. 156.

[13] Ibid., p. 159.

was conceived. His first impulse had been rejection until Friend Ed explained Mordeen's sacrifice: "She is giving you a child--yours--to be your own. Her love for you is so great that she could do a thing that was strange and foul to her and yet not be dirtied by it."[14]

Steinbeck's treatment of the murder of Victor by Friend Ed showed neither condemnation nor praise. Friend Ed drowned Victor to prevent Mordeen's having to stab him.[15] Friend Ed's action was simply reported and no moral stigma was placed upon him. This amoral treatment is a trait of a naturalistic novel, but Joe's free choice to accept the child is the most important action of the book. Determinism is only incidentally present in Burning Bright.

East of Eden is a kaleidoscope of characters and is perhaps the most important novel in this study because it states directly the author's stand on the free will-determinism question. The philosophy of free will is the theme of the book.

Three of the characters--Adam Trask, Lee, and Samuel Hamilton--discussed the Cain-Abel Biblical story twice. The first time the purpose of the meeting was to name Adam's twins. Samuel mentioned Cain and Abel as possibile names, but Adam rejected these, as Samuel knew he would. After

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[14] Ibid., pp. 147-148. [15] Ibid., p. 138.

reading the Genesis account of the story, the men discussed the burden of sin man carries around with him. Adam, however, was glad that the excuse of original sin is possible, because it proves that each individual does not invent sin. He continued, "Some of our guilt is absorbed in our ancestry. What chance did we have? We are the children of our father."[16] Lee believed that the story has lasted because it applies to everyone. He explained further:

> "I think everyone in the world to a large or small extent has felt rejection. And with rejection comes anger, and with anger some kind of crime in revenge for rejection, and with the crime guilt--and there is the story of mankind."[17]

These first explanations of the Cain-Abel story are deterministic. Adam believed that man's heredity of sin has cursed him, while Lee felt that man's environment of rejection has caused evil.

The occasion of the second discussion was Samuel's farewell after his decision to leave his rocky, unproductive farm and move into town. Lee told the other two men that the Genesis story had occupied a great deal of his thought since their first discussion ten years earlier. The more he had thought about it, the more profound the story had become. However, he had worried over the King James

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[16]Steinbeck, East of Eden, p. 239.

[17]Ibid., p. 240.

translation of God's saying to Cain, "Thou shalt" rule over sin, because this instruction is actually a promise. He had compared the American Standard Version and learned that it translates the same words, "Do thou." This last translation is an order.[18] Lee had taken the problem to the old Chinese philosophers in San Francisco, and after years of study they had decided that the true translation of the Hebrew word "timshel" is "Thou mayest." Lee explained to his friends the signification of this discovery:

> "Why, what makes a man great, that gives him stature with the Gods, for in his weakness and his filth and his murder of his brother he still has the great choice. He can choose his course and fight it through and win."[19]

Obviously, the second explanation of the Cain-Abel story is a triumphant assertion of man's free will. Although the book ends with the stroke-ridden Adam gathering all his strength to free his son Cal from his guilt by saying "Timshel," the first explanations of the story emphasizing heredity and environment--determinism--are present in East of Eden, also.

At the beginning Lee's actions were directed by society. Although he was an educated man, born in the United States, he still wore a queue and talked pidgin English. The people expected a Chinaman to do these things,

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[18] Ibid., p. 267. [19] Ibid., p. 269.

and he was not strong enough to rebel against them.[20] However, before the second discussion on free will he had cut his queue.[21] This action was an outside indication of the inner change in Lee. Before knowing Samuel Hamilton, Lee had no personality; he simply blended into the scenery. After becoming interested in the Cain-Abel story, Lee became a human being, feeling his responsibilities.

Cal's personality was also molded by the actions of other people. Because his twin brother Aron was beautiful and ingenuous, he was immediately liked by everyone and preferred to Cal. At first Cal had tried to imitate Aron, but was not successful because his insincerity was obvious. Steinbeck writes:

> And as a few strokes on the nose will make a puppy head shy, so a few rebuffs will make a boy shy all over. But whereas a puppy will cringe away or roll on its back, groveling, a little boy may cover his shyness with nonchalance, with bravado, or with secrecy. And once a boy has suffered rejection, he will find rejection even where it does not exist--or worse, will draw it forth from people simply by expecting it.[22]

Cal did not control his own actions; they were directed by the earlier reactions of others. When the boys met Abra for the first time, Cal knew that she preferred Aron, and carefully planned his revenge. The author explains

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[20] Ibid., p. 142.

[21] Ibid., p. 260.

[22] Ibid., p. 392.

that this was Cal's usual way:

> Out of revenge Cal extracted a fluid of power, and out of power, joy. It was the strongest, purest emotion he knew. Far from disliking Aron, he loved him because he was usually the cause for Cal's feelings of triumph. He had forgotten--if he had ever known--that he punished because he wished he could be loved as Aron was loved. It had gone so far that he preferred what he had to what Aron had.[23]

Although Cal had forgotten the psychological cause for his actions, the present cause was actions of other people toward him and his brother. He was constantly reminded that society preferred Aron and his sense of rejection-crime-guilt was just as Lee had described. Later Cal felt more than his share of man's inherited guilt because of the evil nature of his mother. He told Lee that he hated his mother because he had her evil in him. Lee, true to his new knowledge, attacked this belief:

> "You've got the other too. Listen to me! You wouldn't even be wondering if you didn't have it. Don't you dare take the lazy way. It's too easy to excuse yourself because of your ancestry. Don't let me catch you doing it! Now--look close at me so you will remember. Whatever you do, it will be you who do it--not your mother."[24]

Although Cal did not quite believe Lee, the full realization of the truth of his statement came over the boy when he talked to Kate for the first time. Unlike his mother, he loved his father and did not want to do

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[23] Ibid., p. 310.

[24] Ibid., p. 396.

him harm. Soon Kate turned against Cal and tried to attack him with cruel words. Cal, however, realized the truth of Lee's statement and informed Kate, "If I'm mean, it's my own mean." He further concluded that Kate was sitting in the dark because she was afraid, not because the light hurt her eyes and that he did not hate her any more, but was glad she was afraid.[25]

But Adam's rejection of Cal's gift of money caused Cal to take revenge on Aron. Aron did not know that his mother was living and running a sadistic whore house in town. Cal took Aron to see Kate. That night Aron enlisted in the Army, Cal got drunk, and Kate committed suicide. Just as Lee had said, Cal felt guilt for his crime. The next day Lee entered Cal's room and watched him burn the $10,000 his father had refused because it was profit from the war situation. Lee, who is the strongest spokesman for free will in the novel, tried to make Cal truly see himself by telling him:

> "You're pretty full of yourself. You're marveling at the tragic spectacle of Caleb Trask--Caleb the magnificent, the unique. . . . Did you ever think of yourself as a snot-nose kid--mean sometimes, incredibly generous sometimes? Dirty in your habits and curiously pure in your mind. Maybe you have a little more energy than most, just energy, but outside of that you're very like other snot-nose kids."[26]

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[25] Ibid., p. 411.

[26] Ibid., p. 503.

This therapy helped Cal for the moment, but soon Lee's complete attention was focused on Adam, who had a slight stroke when he learned of Aron's army enlistment. Cal had wanted to tell his father that he was guilty of driving Aron away, but he could not until Adam had a massive stroke when he learned of Aron's death. Cal felt that his father condemned him, even though his father did not speak. Lee exercised his choice and asked Adam to free his son from his burden of guilt.[27] After Adam's "Timshel" blessing, the book ends.

On two occasions Lee denied Adam the right of free choice. When Adam's brother, Charles, willed his estate to Adam and Cathy (now Kate), Adam worried about the possible evil Kate would do with her half of the money. But Lee told him that he really had no choice.

> "Your course is drawn. What you will do is written in every breath you've ever taken. . . . Faced with two sets of morals, you'll follow your training. What you call thinking won't change it. The fact that your wife is a whore in Salinas won't change a thing."[28]

At that time Adam would not admit the truth of Lee's statement, but at noon he gave up, saying to Lee, "I thought in all directions and always a leash snapped me back."[29]

The second time Lee denied Adam free will occurred

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[27] Ibid., p. 533. [28] Ibid., p. 337.

[29] Ibid., p. 339.

after the father had refused Cal's gift. Lee told Cal, "He couldn't help it, Cal. That's his nature. It was the only way he knew. He didn't have any choice."[30] Lee identified Adam's innate trait that prevented his free choice as "bleak honesty."[31] This honesty prevented his keeping Kate's portion of Charles' money, and it forced him to refuse Cal's money that was made as war profit.

Unlike Cal, Kate was not rejected when she was a child. As an only child she did not have to compete with any other children for her parents' love and attention. Her evil nature did not bring with it any remorse. Steinbeck tells us that "Cathy Ames was born with the tendencies, or lack of them, which drove and forced her all of her life," and that another time in history Cathy would have been called possessed by the devil.[32] These statements imply that Cathy had no choice in her actions because of her innate evil nature. She was a freak, a monster.[33] Even as a child she knew how to exploit the appetites, emotions and lusts of the people around her. Giving us another key to Cathy's character, Steinbeck writes, "It is quite possible that she did not believe in any other tendencies in humans, for while she was preternaturally alert in some

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[30] Ibid., p. 481.

[31] Ibid., p. 533.

[32] Ibid., p. 63.

[33] Ibid., p. 62.

directions she was completely blind in others."[34]

Cathy's father, sounding much like Lee, explained their daughter to his wife:

> "The way I look at it is this. . . . We've all of us got a little of the Old Nick in us. I wouldn't want a child that didn't have some gumption. The way I see it, that's just a kind of energy. If you just check it and keep it in control, why, it will go in the right direction."[35]

While Lee was accurately describing Cal's meanness as "energy," Mr. Ames did not understand Cathy at all. Her revenge for her parents' discipline was to burn their house with them in it and to steal money from her father's safe.[36]

Cathy's evil was hidden behind an angelic face. It came to the surface when she was drunk. Both Mr. Edwards with his traveling band of prostitutes[37] and Faye at the Salinas brothel[38] saw the real Cathy. Mr. Edwards was one of the few people with whom Cathy came in contact that got the better of her; he almost beat her to death. Faye, however, slowly sickened and died because of the poison Cathy/Kate gave her.[39]

Cathy was afraid of Dr. Tilson at King City who discovered that she had tried to abort her pregnancy. His

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[34] Ibid., p. 65.
[35] Ibid., p. 75.
[36] Ibid., pp. 76-77.
[37] Ibid., p. 85.
[38] Ibid., p. 207.
[39] Ibid., p. 222.

threat to testify against her should she try it again forced her to invent a story about epilepsy in her family.[40] The doctor's first thought about there being "something inhuman about her" was overshadowed by pity at her "confession." At the ranch she was "not afraid of Lee, yet she was not comfortable with him either."[41] She hated and feared Samuel Hamilton so much that she bit him when he was helping her have the twins.[42] When Adam went to see her for the first time at the brothel, she first said that she did not hate him because he was a weak fool.[43] But as he was leaving, she shouted that she finally did hate him.[44]

The cause of Cathy's outburst at Adam could have been his identifying her as "a twisted human--or no human at all."[45] On his second visit he informed her that she knew the ugliness of men but she did not know the goodness. In fact she was sure that ugliness is all there is, he told her. Despite her derision, he continued:

> "I think you are only a part of a human. . . . But I wonder whether you ever feel that something invisible is all around you. It would be horrible if you knew it was there and couldn't see it or feel it."[46]

When Cal talked to Kate, he asked her if she ever

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[40] Ibid., p. 117.
[41] Ibid., p. 140.
[42] Ibid., p. 170.
[43] Ibid., p. 285.
[44] Ibid., p. 289.
[45] Ibid., p. 287
[46] Ibid., p. 342.

felt when she was a little girl that she was missing something, that other people knew something that she did not know.[47] She dismissed him, just as she had her husband. After Cal brought Aron to see her, Kate finally realized that both Adam and Cal had been right. "They had something she lacked, and she didn't know what it was."[48] With this knowledge, she could not live; so, after writing a will leaving everything to Aron, she killed herself.[49] Whether or not Kate's death-bed realization of her lack of goodness is convincing is not within the realm of this study.

However, the author's description of the inevitability of her suicide after she realized her evil nature indicates that Kate's life was determined by forces outside her own control. Halfway in the book, Steinbeck doubts his first categorizing her as a monster because

> . . . since we cannot know what she wanted we will never know whether or not she got it. If rather than running toward something, she ran away from something, we can't know whether she escaped. Who knows but that she tried to tell someone or everyone what she was like and could not, for lack of a common language. Her life may have been her language, normal, developed, indecipherable. It is easy to say she was bad, but there is little meaning unless we know why.[50]

Even if Kate was running away from something, her life was

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[47] Ibid., p. 411.

[48] Ibid., p. 488.

[49] Ibid., p. 489.

[50] Ibid., p. 162.

not hers to control. Even if she was compelled by her lack of understanding of goodness in others and her need for money as security against the evilness she recognized, she was not a free agent. The author tells us that she was glad to learn that the pain in her hands was arthritis. "An evil voice had whispered that it might be punishment."[51] But, of course, Kate did not really believe in punishment for herself.

She wanted to punish Cal because he had scored a point against her. But suddenly she did not want to punish Aron, nor did she want him to know about her. Aron was not smart in Kate's ways and he could not defend himself. She would like for him to discover her "in an elegant little house on the East Side" of New York.[52] The events were out of her control, however, because Aron did find out about her, as we have seen.

Along with the story of the Trasks runs the story of Steinbeck's maternal ancestors, the Hamiltons. Samuel was an Irish settler of California whose wisdom and humor were leavened by the strict Calvinism of his wife liza. Steinbeck recalls his grandmother:

> She had no spark of humor and only occasionally a blade of cutting wit. She frightened her grandchildren because she had no weakness. She suffered bravely and

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[51] Ibid., p. 419.

[52] Ibid., p. 453.

> uncomplainingly through life, convinced that that was the way her God wanted everyone to live. She felt that rewards came later.[53]

And perhaps a little humourously he adds later: "It was well known that Liza Hamilton and the Lord God held similar convictions on nearly every subject."[54]

Samuel respected his wife even though they were so far apart in temperament. After Samuel helped deliver the Trask twins, he was afraid for their safety because of the blackness he felt around Cathy. He told Lee:

> "I want my wife. . . . No dreams, no ghosts, no foolishness. I want her here. . . . Liza has no truck with foolishness. And, Lee, if Liza sees a ghost, it's a ghost and not a fragment of a dream. If Liza feels trouble we'll bar the doors."[55]

Liza spent a week with the Trasks and saw Cathy as a sensible girl, though lazy. Significantly, Liza did not like Cathy very much, although she did not know the reason for her dislike.[56] Liza liked Lee because he was not a heathen but a Presbyterian who could be trusted to bring up the twins.[57] When Lee asked Samuel how Liza felt about the paradoxes in the Bible, Samuel answered, "Why, she does not feel anything because she does not admit they are there!" And he continued, "Ask her. And you'll come out

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[53] Ibid., p. 9.

[54] Ibid., p. 159.

[55] Ibid., p. 173.

[56] Ibid., p. 176.

[57] Ibid., p. 177.

of it older but not less confused."[58]

Liza was a realist who had no love of places, thinking that any earthly place was "only a resting stage on the way to Heaven." She did not fear death but only considered it "a thing promised and expected."[59] After Samuel died, her son Will described her as strong. He added, "She stands on her two feet. She's a tower of strength."[60] Although Liza was as Calvinistic as Burton of To a God Unknown as far as believing that pleasure is a sin, she also believed that circumstances do not dictate actions. Of course, Steinbeck's admiration for his grandmother is evident in her characterization, but it is obvious that Liza believed in free will on earth even if she also felt certain of predestination in Heaven.

Of the stories about Samuel and Liza's children those of Will and Tom are significant to this study. Will was "truly beloved of the gods" because he became successful financially without "effort or planning."[61] But Will felt himself different from his family because of his ability to earn money. Steinbeck writes, "He thought they were ashamed of him, and he fought bitterly for their recognition."[62]

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[58] Ibid., p. 239.

[59] Ibid., p. 259.

[60] Ibid., p. 292.

[61] Ibid., p. 33.

[62] Ibid., p. 423.

He used his money to help them when they needed it, but he did not feel really accepted by them. When Cal came to Will, asking his help to recoup Adam's loss of money on the lettuce fiasco, Will experienced kinship immediately. He guessed that Cal felt that Adam loved Aron better than he loved Cal, but he was shaken when Cal immediately admitted that he was trying to buy his father's love. "Will had never met anyone who spoke so nakedly."[63] Samuel probably had not meant to be partial in his dealings with his children, but Will had felt all his life that his brother Tom was the family favorite. Like Cal, Will had felt rejection and was using his one gift of making money to try to buy his own family's love. Will's early environment was the determining force in his life; he was not a free agent.

Most like his father was Tom, who was "born in fury and lived in lightning. . . . He was a giant in joy and enthusiasms. . . . He lived in a world shining and fresh and as uninspected as Eden on the sixth day."[64] Not only did Tom have huge joys, but he also had great sorrows. Unlike his father, Tom had a driving sexual need for which he probably felt guilty because of the high moral standards

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[63] Ibid., p. 424. [64] Ibid. p. 34.

of the family.[65] Samuel told Adam, "My Tom is a hell-bent boy. Always takes more on his plate than he can eat. . . . I don't know what will come to Tom. Maybe greatness, maybe the noose."[66]

The author states that "it is probable that his father stood between Tom and the sun, and Samuel's shadow fell on him."[67] Tom, too, was influenced by his environment. He felt unworthy because he had the violence and the sexual need that his father did not possess. Dessie, his sister, believed that Tom was really pure, unfit for the world. "A dragon killer, he was, a rescuer of damsels, and his small sins seemed so great to him that he felt unfit and unseemly," she continued.[68] Tom gave Dessie salts when she complained of pain in her stomach, and she died of a burst appendix. Just like Uncle John in The Grapes of Wrath, Tom felt responsible for her death. He thought of himself as her murderer, and he could not live. He did not want his mother to know that he had committed suicide because she felt "that it combined three things of which she strongly disapproved--bad manners, cowardice, and sin."[69] Tom wrote Will to tell their mother that he was

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[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid., p. 123.

[67] Ibid., p. 250.

[68] Ibid., p. 357.

[69] Ibid., p. 364.

killed by his horse, but in reality he shot himself.[70]

Tom's choice of action was limited by his failure to be completely like his father or like his mother; he was a combination of them both. He "thought big" like his father, but his mother's training had given him a sense of sin. He was a victim of his heredity and environment.

"Timshel"--"Thou mayest" is the overriding philosophy of East of Eden. Mankind has a choice between good and evil. Steinbeck believes that men "want to be good and want to be loved." He thinks that "if you or I must choose between two courses of thought or action, we should remember our dying and try so to live that our death brings no pleasure to the world."[71] Although all of the thoughts and actions of the novel do not show the free will of the characters, the goodness in Adam, Lee, Samuel, Liza, and even Cal, Will, and Tom far outweighs the evil in Kate. Thus, Steinbeck's essential optimism is shown.

Although The Short Reign of Pippin IV is a light satire of French and American politics in 1957, it does contain examples of free will and determinism. M. Pippin Arnulf Heristal was an amateur astronomer who was chosen to be king because he was descended from Charlemagne.[72]

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[70] Ibid., p. 365. [71] Ibid., p. 367.

[72] Steinbeck, The Short Reign of Pippin IV, p. 44.

Thus, his heredity was the determining force in this part of his life.

Pippin felt the inadequacy of the individual in controlling the actions of the country. When the representative asked him if he forbade the people to choose him king of France, Pippin answered, "How can I forbid anything a republic might take it into its head to do, even destroy itself? I am the broken tip of a long dog's long tail. Can I wag the dog?"[73]

Uncle Charlie told Pippin that he could not refuse the kingship because the large number of French aristocrats would demand that he accept.[74] Pippin was forced by circumstances to accept the kingship, even though he did not want it. After he became king, Pippin described his feeling to Sister Hyacinthe, "I did not ask to be king. I was picked like a berry from a bush and placed in a position where there are many precedents, nearly all of them bad and all of them unsuccessful."[75]

The author tells us that the personality of the king was possibly changing:

> Who of us who do not have the blood can know what happened at Reims when the royal crown descended? . . . Perhaps the king did not know what was happening.

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[73] Ibid., p. 49.

[74] Ibid., p. 55.

[75] Ibid., p. 108.

> Perhaps he . . . responded to forgotten stimuli. It seems undeniable that the kingdom created the king.[76]

Pippin's actions were directed either by his heredity--that he was descended from Charlemagne--or, up to a point, by his environment--that the "kingdom created a king." Tod, the American fiance of Pippin's daughter, did not believe that his father made his own chicken farm business, either. The decisions were really made by "circumstances and pressures. . . . If he hadn't gone along with the pressures he wouldn't be in business," Tod continued, reiterating his father's lack of free will.[77]

Tod doubted that Pippin would be as successful as his father, however. He told his prospective father-in-law,

> "I know you're the king and you're older than I am but you haven't had much practice kinging. You've got a great little thing here, great, but it can blow up in your face if you don't play your cards right."[78]

The king could not "let happen what will happen"; he believed that men "want to do a thing well, even a thing they do not want to do."[79] He was looking for "some sense of mission, of divinity, of purpose."[80] Pippin visited different parts of the country incognito and discovered the inequality and unfairness of French society. Uncle Charlie

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[76] Ibid., pp. 133-134.

[77] Ibid., p. 117.

[78] Ibid., p. 105.

[79] Ibid., p. 108.

[80] Ibid., p. 97.

warned him that the people would destroy him, but Pippin could not stop. He replied, "It seems to me that even though the king may know he will fail, the king must try."[81] Uncle Charlie finally planned to leave the country because he feared that the king would do something foolish. He had told Pippin that the king was a patsy--a pawn, and the king interpreted this role by saying, "A king can move one square forward, backward, sideways, aslant, but a patsy--or a pawn--only ahead."[82] This comparison to a chess game implies that the king was doing what he had to do, that he only had one direction in which to go.

Sister Hyacinthe had told the king that what a man does is usually what a man is. When this latter point is determined, "there is very little latitude in what he does."[83] While the disguised king was trying to find out "what he is," he discovered an old man fishing for a statue that had been pushed into the moat around a ruined castle. When the king asked him why other people pushed the statue in, the old man replied, "There's just people that push things in the moat." And when he was asked why he rescued the statue, he said, "I guess there's people that pull things out--that's what they do. I guess I'm one of that

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[81] Ibid., p. 139

[82] Ibid., p. 164.

[83] Ibid., p. 149.

kind."[84] The old man and Sister Hyacinthe believed that an inner quality in man makes him what he is. This inner feeling is not forced on the individual by something outside his will. It seems to be his will. Like the old man at the sea in To a God Unknown, the old man at the moat acted in the way he wished to act. Neither killing a small animal at sunset nor pulling a statue was an action forced upon these characters by society, heredity, or environment. They chose to do these things.

The point at which the king exercised his free choice occurred during his second meeting with the old man. The king tried unsuccessfully to prevent some young people from throwing the statue into the moat and was pushed in himself. After the old man rescued him and took him to his shack to dry out, Pippin asked him what he thought of the king. At first the old man hesitated, but finally he compared the king to Father Christmas: after you grow up you do not believe in him. He is just a dream. The only way for a man to be sure that another man is really king is for him to be guillotined. Pippin made his decision:

> "To be guillotined a man must have done something to make him worthy of the guillotine. The guillotine or--or the Cross requires either a thief or--Thank you, my puller-out-of-things."[85]

The king chose to be a saviour, but he changed his mind.

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[84] Ibid., p. 146. [85] Ibid., pp. 154-155.

After Pippin's speech advocating specific ways to make opportunities for a better life available to all, the citizens and the Assembly turned against him. Although Sister Hyacinthe offered him the traditional nun's habit in which to escape, he did not wish to try to leave the country. He explained:

> "No, Sister. I am not brave. I do not want to be a sacrifice. I want my little house, my wife, and my telescope--nothing more. If they had not forced me to be king I would not have been forced to be kingly. It was a series of psychological accidents."[86]

Pippin believed that his actions were caused by his kingly position. Actually, however, he made two decisions--to be a saviour and not to be a saviour. These decisions indicate that Pippin actually had exercised his free will, even though his kingship was hereditary and the kingly environment exerted some influence.

Sister Hyacinthe had been a dancer at the Follies until her weariness and fallen arches caused her to become a nun. She was the Doc Burton of the novel and was interested in humanity and its progress. Her Roman Catholic philosophy seems a modern version of Calvinism. She told the king, "Sin is difficult to isolate in oneself. . . . In others it is easy to discern, but in ourselves it has a way of being based on necessity or good intentions."[87]

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[86] Ibid., p. 180.

[87] Ibid., p. 110.

But Steinbeck's optimism is evident in another of her comments:

> "I should say that a good deed may be unwise, but it cannot be evil. It seems to me that the forward history of humans is based on good deeds that exploded--Oh! and many were hurt or killed or impoverished, but some of the good remained."[88]

Pippin returned to his private house at the end of the novel after the populace and the Assembly named him an outlaw. The monarchy was at an end; the republic was reborn. While Pippin did not really enjoy being king, he tried to do his best to serve the people. King Pippin was forced by heredity and environment to become king, but he chose to speak on Code Pippin. Free will triumphs at this climax of the story, as Pippin is not bound by the pressures of society.

The pressures of society bore down on Ethan Hawley in The Winter of Our Discontent, and almost completely overwhelmed him. His family had had money and position. He had lost the money by trying to run his own grocery business, and he knew he would gradually lose the position; for he believed that "gentry without money gradually ceases to be gentry." He did not want money for itself. "But money is necessary to keep my place in a category I am used to and comfortable in," he thought.[89]

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[88] Ibid., p. 150.

[89] Steinbeck, The Winter of Our Discontent, p. 104.

The "circumstances and pressures" were there to force his reporting his employer to the immigration officials and to push him into giving Danny, his alcoholic friend, money for the "cure," knowing all along that, if guilty, Marullo could be forced to sell him the grocery store at a low cost and that Danny would probably drink himself to death after willing Ethan his property. Society's force was behind Ethan's decision to compromise his integrity. As Margie Young-heart thought, Ethan was "bound in . . . a social-economic bind that robbed him of strength and certainty."[90]

At first Ethan took the blame himself for his decisions to betray Marullo and to overtempt Danny. In one of the first person narration parts of the book Steinbeck records Ethan's thoughts:

> I had made my moves that could not be recalled. Time and incidents had played along, had seemed to collaborate with me. I did not ever draw virtue down to hide what I was doing from myself. No one made me take the course I had chosen.[91]

Ethan realized that if he was to buy Marullo's store, which had originally been the Hawley store, he needed money for capital. Joey Morphy, the bank teller who was a friend of Ethan's, had already told him that the best time to rob a bank was just before a long weekend.[92] Joey gave

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[90] Ibid., p. 172.

[91] Ibid., p. 200.

[92] Ibid., p. 6.

ammunition to this thought by always stuffing Kleenex in the lock of the bank's back door.[93] Ethan's wife Mary had accused him of "wallowing" in his failure and had assured him that he could rescue himself if he didn't have his "old-fashioned fancy-pants ideas."[94] Margie Young-heart, whose great-grandmother had been banished from Russia to Alaska for witchcraft,[95] read in the cards that Ethan would be rich and famous.[96] When Mary had Margie for supper, Ethan's inner reaction to his thoughts was violent. He felt a terrible pain which warned him of danger ahead. The women did not know what he was going through as he thought:

> I understand how people once believed the devil could take possession. I'm not sure I don't believe it. Possession! The seething birth of something foreign with every nerve resisting and losing the fight and settling back beaten to make peace with the invader.[97]

Later that night Ethan could not sleep because he was thinking about the things that had happened to him since he first considered robbing the bank, betraying his employer, and sacrificing Danny. In Ethan's words, "I found that the dark jury of the deep had already decided for me. There it was, laid out and certain."[98] But a note of doubt entered Ethan's thoughts when he learned that Danny had disappeared

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[93] Ibid., p. 133.
[94] Ibid., p. 33.
[95] Ibid., p. 80.
[96] Ibid., p. 30.
[97] Ibid., p. 77.
[98] Ibid., p. 89.

after accepting the $1000. Ethan believed that perhaps he had no choice "in the strange, uncharted country" he had entered. Could he really stop the process if he wanted to? He continued:

> Did I really start it, or did I simply not resist it? I may have been the mover, but was I not also the moved? Once on the long street, there seemed to be no crossroads, no forked paths, no choice.[99]

He was surer about his lack of control when Marullo loaned him a car for the Fourth of July weekend. Ethan thought:

> Some outside force or design seemed to have taken control of events so that they were crowded close the way cattle are in a loading chute. . . . But sometimes the force or design deflects and destroys, no matter how careful and deep the planning.[100]

Ethan's two different ideas--that he was the "mover" and the "moved"--were emphasized in his imaginary conversations with his now dead grandfather, Cap'n Hawley. He remembered that once his grandfather had told him that he had to do a particular thing. Ethan continued his reminiscence: "Just said I must, and so I did. Nothing mysterious or mystic about that. It's asking for advice or an excuse from the inner part of you that is formed and certain."[101] This inside force seems similar to that in Adam Trask which would not let him lie or steal. Like his treatment of Adam,

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[99] Ibid., p. 185. [100] Ibid., p. 189.

[101] Ibid., p. 52.

Steinbeck appears to be denying Ethan free choice in this instance.

The opposite side of the argument was covered when Cap'n Hawley, imagined this time, told Ethan he would have to "set his own course." A particular way might be bad for one person and good for another, and one does not know which until after the direction is followed.[102] Through the mouth of the Cap'n (or Ethan really) the author is again declaring that a man has free will. He can choose the steps he takes, even if he does not know the consequences of these actions.

At the beginning of the book Ethan's private morality was almost unbelievably high. Marullo found it extremely difficult to accept the fact that Ethan had never taken anything out of the store without signing for it and having the wholesale cost deducted from his salary. Ethan was so honest that he did not know that other men had accepted "kickbacks" without question. When Joey and finally Marullo told him to accept the salesman's offer, Ethan's moral fiber began to crack. This inner change was not at first apparent to his friends, because after Ethan's fall Danny still described his friend as "the kid with the built-in judge."[103] Ethan searched his soul and could find no permanent damage because of his betrayal of Danny. He concluded: "I asked

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[102] Ibid., p. 93.

[103] Ibid., p. 120.

whether having set my course, I could change direction or even reverse the compass ninety degrees and I thought I could but I didn't want to."[104] Ethan was convinced that after his two betrayals and bank robbery he would return to the innocent, honest man he had been.

The evils of society and the state of public morality are emphasized by Steinbeck, because the leaders of New Baytown were indicted by the state for graft and fraud, after Chief Stoney had bought his own immunity by informing on his friends. When Danny died of alcoholism, Ethan's power as the owner of the only land suitable for an airplane field was recognized by banker Baker, and Ethan was offered the bribe of being city manager. Ethan, using his power, demanded 51% of any corporation the city leaders were planning to establish to oversee the landing field. He was no longer a "pleasant fool," but a shrewd business man. His need for money and position had changed his whole personality. He had demanded his birthright as a descendant of the first settlers of Baytown who combined piracy and puritanism. These attributes are not very different, the author explains, because "both have a strong dislike for opposition and both have a roving eye for other people's property."[105] Ethan's roving eye centered on the grocery

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[104] Ibid., p. 123. [105] Ibid., p. 36.

store, and all of his actions were directed toward regaining ownership and retaining the Hawley's status.

Although Ethan's reporting Marullo's illegal entry into the United States was a betrayal of his employer by which the informant hoped to make a personal gain, the action itself was honest. Marullo had entered the country illegally and according to strict morality ought to be deported. Of course, when he first arrived, Marullo's version of the American Dream was killed by the rapacious atmosphere of America's society. It is ironic that Ethan restored Marullo's faith in the American Dream just as the clerk was losing his own dream. Society is really the villain that changed both of these men for the worse.

However, Marullo's decision to give Ethan his store and Ethan's belief that he must not kill himself because he could help pass the light (of morality?) down to his daughter were free choices. For Ethan, his daughter's reporting to the sponsors of Allen's copying his "I Love America" essay and her mystical rapport with her father's talisman indicated that there is hope for individual good in an evil society. With this hope Ethan can continue his life, not as innocent as he was before, but perhaps stronger because of his glimpse into the sordid soul of part of the world.

Thus, The Winter of Our Discontent ends optimistically,

just as do The Grapes of Wrath, East of Eden, and even To a God Unknown. Such hope is not a characteristic of a naturalistic novel.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Determinism is all black because such a philosophy has no hope. Of Mice and Men is the only Steinbeck novel that is totally deterministic. There was no hope that George would ever escape his ranch hand work and buy the small place of his own. Lennie was his reason for being, even if the brute made his life full of troubles. At the end of the novel George was free of the troubles Lennie caused, but he had no purpose in his life. Their environment and Lennie's heredity determined all of the action in Of Mice and Men.

Heredity is also important in To a God Unknown, since Joseph inherited the mysticism of his father, as Juanito had from his Indian mother, and Elizabeth had from her Druid ancestors. However, To a God Unknown is not pessimistic because the rain came to the parched valley at the end. This valley will not become a desert; it will become green and flourish again. Just as on the third day of creation when, according to the Genesis account, "the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself after his kind," the California land has a chance to be fruitful and multiply. Joseph was sacrificed, but his son was to be

reared by Rama in a new environment of free will. Although Joseph was pushed during his life and at the time of his death by forces really too strong for his individual will, the optimistic ending and Rama's influence make To a God Unknown a mixture of determinism and free will.

Tortilla Flat and In Dubious Battle also do not totally epitomize determinism nor free will. In both of these early novels the actions of the followers were guided by the leaders. Danny's hospitality, his love affairs, and his try at independence motivated many of the actions of his friends. In their independent love affairs and "good deeds" they were free agents. Danny decided his own actions at first, but the "weight of property" and the responsibility he felt for his friends killed his independence. His fight with The Enemy caused his death. Even if this Enemy was not Society, it was a determining force in Danny's life. He lost his independence and his life.

Jim, too, lost his life at the end of In Dubious Battle. The prejudice of the landowners against the strikers was his murderer. Because he was poor, Jim was pushed by society before he joined the movement; and he was murdered by the hostile society. Only momentarily, when he asserted his leadership the day before his death, did Jim exert his free will. Mac, on the other hand, was the leader of the strikers who used every opportunity to further the

strike. He manipulated the strikers, Al, Mr. Anderson--everyone but Doc Burton. Mac's repeated belief that the common man will win in the end, even if this particular strike would fail, is one element that saves In Dubious Battle from being naturalistic. Al chose his own actions, limited only by the good of the strike.

Doc Burton was a true free agent who helped the strikers because he wanted to help them. He was not forced by society or heredity to use his skill in this way. His questioning the necessity of the violence of the strike contained the words of a reasonable man who thinks for himself. His sympathy for Anderson, who would be punished by the land-owning bank for helping the strikers, indicated that he cared what happened to men as men and not as representatives of any cause. His concern for Al probably caused the doctor's death, because he disappeared immediately after he left for the Anderson place to tend to Al's injuries. Both Doc Burton and Mac chose their own actions.

The Grapes of Wrath and East of Eden each concern primarily one family, but the family is representative of mankind. The Joads, more than the Trasks, were circumvented by socio-economic forces that determined the physical things that happened to them. Drought, poverty, prejudice--all constituted almost insurmountable burdens for the Okies to carry. But the elements that dominate The Grapes of

Wrath are the authority of Ma Joad and the Emersonian philosophy of Jim Casy. Ma used a jack handle to prevent the family from breaking up on the trip to California, and she soothed Tom with her belief in the survival of the common people. The sure progress of the land turtle and Rose of Sharon's saving the starving man are both symbolic of man's survival. Although the inevitability of survival may be construed to be determinism, it is optimistic determinism. Good is predestined rather than bad, or a combination of the two.

Jim Casy's philosophy, like that of Emerson, emphasizes the good in man and, less clearly than Emerson's, denies that evil exists. Casy was a martyr to the cause of a decent working wage; and in all of his actions (except sexual) he was a free agent, living his belief. Because Tom became his disciple, Casy's gospel did not die when he was murdered. It, like the people, will go on. Such a faith denies the pessimism of ordinary naturalistic novels and emphasizes again the optimism of Steinbeck's determinism.

The theme of East of Eden, of course, is that man has a choice in his actions. He can choose good or evil. The implementation of this theme is clearest with the author's development of Cal's story. Until Lee opened Cal's eyes to his right to choose good actions rather than his curse of doing evil because of his heredity, Cal had been an almost

tragic picture of rejection-revenge-guilt. His guilt because he "murdered" Aron was the cause of Lee's entering Adam's sick room. Lee's demand that Adam free Cal from his sense of guilt produced Adam's "Timshel" blessing.

Whether Cal would choose good or evil is not absolutely clear, but Lee's philosophy and Adam's blessing freed Cal to make his own choice. He was not condemned to choose evil because Kate was his mother, just as Abra was not forced to choose evil because her father was an embezzler. Since Abra loved Cal, he should no longer feel rejected. Without rejection, there was no need for revenge or guilt. Without rejection, Cal was free to choose good. But he was not forced to choose good; so East of Eden is not deterministic, even in the optimistic sense.

Cannery Row and Sweet Thursday celebrate the free life, unhampered by any of the rules of ordinary society. Neither sexual morality nor public law enforcers bothered the citizens of the Row, but they were influenced by their own rules. They could not steal wine for Doc's party because he would not have liked it. Mack would not "roll a drunk." Suzy did not want Doc to be "sandbagged," but preferred that he choose her himself. Free will and determinism are mixed in Cannery Row and Sweet Thursday, with the preponderance of evidence on the side of free will. Mack and the boys were praised because they lived their

own lives independently, doing what they wanted to do rather than what ordinary society dictated.

The central idea of both Burning Bright and The Short Reign of Pippin IV is free will. Although in the beginning, Joe Saul thought that the proper ancestry is necessary for one to be a good acrobat, farmer, or ship captain, at the end he chose to believe that Mordeen's child was his. His concern with biological heredity was changed to a conviction that the child would absorb the really important ideas through his loving home. Heredity was unimportant in Joe Saul's new world, which he chose to enter.

Pippin's ancestry was not under his control and the mysterious environmental influences of being king were present in his short reign. However, he decided to be a real king and not a pawn when he toured the country incognito and pronounced his Code Pippin. Although heredity and environment exerted both direct and subtle pressures, his most significant action was his free choice.

In The Winter of Our Discontent Ethan Hawley was pushed by society to betray Marullo and Danny in order to regain his social status. The idea that society corrupts an innocent man is determinism. However, this is not the end of the story, because Ethan was "born again" in The Place. He reaffirmed his individual belief in personal morality and chose not to kill himself. He had joined

the enemy momentarily because society's values compelled his "discontent" with his status, but he ultimately resigned from the enemy's forces and asserted his individuality. Thus, Steinbeck's last published novel emphasizes man's opportunity to choose his own course, his free will.

In all of the novels after The Grapes of Wrath, the philosophy of free will is dominant, even though all of them contain some elements of determinism. The early novels, also, contain both philosophies; however, the philosophy of determinism predominates. Even the early novels, however, with the exception of Of Mice and Men, are essentially optimistic. It is the conclusion of this thesis that Steinbeck is not a naturalistic novelist; that, with the exception of Of Mice and Men, his determinism is optimistic; and that his main assertion in his novels since The Grapes of Wrath is that man's will is free.

When he accepted the Nobel Prize for literature in 1962, Steinbeck said:

> Less than fifty years after [Nobel's] death, the door of nature was unlocked and we were offered the dreadful burden of choice. We have usurped many of the powers we once ascribed to God. Fearful and unprepared, we have assumed lordship over the life and death of the whole world, of all living things. The danger and the glory and the choice rest finally in man. The test of his perfectibility is at hand.[1]

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[1] "John Steinbeck's Acceptance Speech," Vogue, CXLI (March 1, 1963), p. 16.

John Steinbeck believes that man can choose, that he can select the path of "glory" leading towards "perfectibility." His novels, except for Of Mice and Men, reflect this optimism.

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